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**An Analysis of Trade Union Strategies  
in the new Employee Relations Climate  
in Mauritius**

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Doctor of Business Administration Degree

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### Abstract

This dissertation aimed at identifying and explaining why trade unions in Mauritius have lost their influence in the contemporary workplace context. After being vibrant during the buoyant period of the 1970s, trade unions now face challenges that they must justly consider to enable them develop in today's society. This phenomenon is global and affects both advanced and developing economies from a workplace perspective. The study examined why trade unions lost their influence over employees, members and society. It identified that trade union influence was on the decline and, if unions maintained the same structure and objectives that focused mainly on member recruitment and disputes over pay, they would not survive in the current and forthcoming conditions since there is better employee education, legal framework supporting employees and wider use of technology. The Employee Relations Act 2008 served as a background with new developments in favour of the employee but unions contested key provisions it made. The research conducted with a systematically organised sample of some 100 respondents, confirmed that unions, both public and private, had to focus on strategic factors and that these would determine their success. The findings showed that if unions followed key strategies for their survival, namely innovation in communication, leadership, female empowerment, social partnership, union rationalisation and focus on globalisation, they would secure better chances to remain relevant and maintain their credibility among the stakeholders of employee relations, in particular, employees, employers and government. A model and recommendations were developed that could lead to ensuring the success and survival of trade unions in Mauritius in the years to come.

*Key words:* trade unions, strategies, employee relations

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### SUMMARY OF TERMINOLOGY USED

<b>Bipartite</b>	The negotiations are between the employers and employees without a third party's intervention (whatishumanresource.com).
<b>Business Process Outsourcing</b>	A method of subcontracting various business-related operations to a third party (Investopedia). A terminology used in Mauritius regarding the Information and Communications sector working externally with headquarters in France, India, etc.
<b>Statistics Mauritius</b>	The local statistical body compiling data in the Government of Mauritius (Government of Mauritius online).
<b>Collective bargaining</b>	Negotiation between one or more trade unions and one or more employers or an employers' organisation on the incomes and working conditions of the employees. (The Free Dictionary online)
<b>Conciliation and Mediation Commission (CMC)</b>	A new organisation set up in 2008 to replace the Tribunal d'Arbitrage Permanent (TAP) as a mediator and conciliator of employee relations (Government of Mauritius online).
<b>Confederation</b>	Alliance, association or league in which independent entities retain their distinction and sovereignty but delegate some powers and rights to a central body (such as a central or federal government) which remains subordinate to the entities (business dictionary.com).

<b>Creole</b>	Local language or vernacular also known as the ‘lingua franca’ of Mauritius, practical for communication.  Mauritian creole (Kreol morisyen) is a French-based Creole language spoken in Mauritius (Wikipedia).
<b>Employment Relations Act 2008</b>	A labour legislation in Mauritius replacing the previous Industrial Relations Act 1973(Government of Mauritius online).
<b>Empowerment</b>	The process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes (Worldbank.org).
<b>Export Processing Zone (EPZ)</b>	A free trade zone (FTZ) or export processing zone (EPZ), formerly free port is an area within which goods may be landed, handled, manufactured or reconfigured, and re-exported without the intervention of the customs authorities (Wikipedia).
<b>Facebook or Twitter</b>	Social network systems established in 2008 onwards for new communication strategy in society.
<b>Fisher’s exact test</b>	Evaluates the hypothesis of independence between two categorical random variables (Springerreference.com).
<b>Globalisation</b>	A concept explaining the interaction of macro-economic forces in an international climate with more similarities and lesser differences (Financial Times Lexicon).

<b>GraphPad Software</b>	The e-based statistical operator used for computation in this research (Graphpad.com).
<b>ILO</b>	A United Nations agency that strives to serve as a uniting force between governments, businesses and workers to promote decent work throughout the world (Investopedia).
<b>Les années de braise</b>	French terminology to explain Marxism in the 1970s based on May 1968 events in France (Le Figaro).
<b>Likert Scale</b>	A type of psychometric scale frequently used in psychology questionnaires. It was developed by and named after organisational psychologist Rensis Likert (about.com).
<b>Marxist perspective</b>	A system of economic, social, and political philosophy based on ideas that view social change in terms of economic factors (businessdictionary.com).
<b>Monocrop culture</b>	Monocropping is the high-yield agricultural practice of growing a single crop year after year on the same land, in the absence rotation through other crops (Wikipedia).  Mauritius relied on a single crop production, sugarcane, and prior to the 1990s.
<b>Null Hypothesis</b>	A type of hypothesis used in statistics that proposes that no statistical significance exists in a set of given observations (Investopedia). The null hypothesis states no relationship between two variables and its acceptance means that the present assumption is valid.

<b><i>p</i>-value</b>	The P value or calculated probability is the estimated probability of rejecting the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) of a study question when that hypothesis is true (Statsdirect.com).
<b>Panel of Expert Opinion</b>	A selected group of individuals from industry and academic field to criticise findings in the research and to improve the strength of the obtained result. Expert panels are used when specialized input and opinion is required for an evaluation (betterevaluation.org).
<b>Parapublic or parastatal bodies</b>	State-controlled organisations with a certain degree of autonomy (Government of Mauritius online).
<b>Pay Research Bureau</b>	A local salary commission concerned with the implementation of wage systems and reward. The latest report was prepared in August 2012(Government of Mauritius online).
<b>Pluralistic perspective</b>	The process of conflict and dialogue that lead to a definition and subsequent realization of the common good that is best for all members of society (Wikipedia).
<b>Streamlining</b>	A reorganisation of a company in order to increase its efficiency. This may lead to an expansion or reduction in company size, a change of policy, or an alteration of strategy (Investopedia).
<b>Sectoral bargaining</b>	Bargaining within a specific industry e.g. sugar industry

	only.
<b>sms and e-mail</b>	Short message system and electronic mail for ease of communication.
<b>Social Partnership</b>	These are the trade unions and the employers or their representative organisations engaged in social dialogue. The idea of social partnership is strongly founded in many European models of industrial relations.
<b>Trade Union</b>	An organisation whose membership consists of workers and union leaders, united to protect promote their common interests.(business dictionary.com)
<b>Tripartite</b>	A tripartite panel, in the employment context is a three-member arbitration board in which one member represents management, one member represents the union, and one member is neutral. It is a tool for resolving disputes and grievances in the workplace (Uslegal.com).
<b>Type I Error</b>	The incorrect rejection of a true null hypothesis. A type I error is a false positive. Usually a type I error leads one to conclude that a supposed effect or relationship exists when in fact it doesn't (statistics.com).
<b>Workfare Programme</b>	A government plan under which employable welfare recipients are required to accept public-service jobs or participate in job training (Free Dictionary online).
<b>WTO</b>	World Trade Organisation - a transnational body replacing

	<p>GATT in 1995. An international organization dealing with the global rules of trade between nations. Its main function is to ensure that trade flows as smoothly, predictably, and freely as possible (Investopedia).</p>
<b>Z- test</b>	<p>A statistical test used to determine whether two population means are different when the variances are known and the sample size is large (Investopedia).</p>

## Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work to all the members of my family as going through a Doctoral programme is broadly similar to the “Pilgrim’s Progress” with various encounters and challenges that may crop up somewhere. But then, thanks to all SMC staff who have been indulgent enough to help me review and improve my work to attain the desired standard. My feelings also go to workers and trade unions that form a key component of employee relations at the workplace. The representation of workers and their right for workplace democracy remain a challenging area for me so long as there is an intention to bring more equality and democracy at work.



## **Chapter 1: Overview**

### **Background of the Study**

Mauritius, an island-nation in the Indian Ocean, follows a democratic tradition of employee relations and has a mixed-market economy, which relies on partnerships of both the public and private sectors. Its economic system has espoused employee relations with adequate representation of the three main partners of the bargaining process, which involves trade unions, government, and private sector employers.

Mauritius remains one of the best-governed economies in Africa. As a result, its sound democratic system is based on British Westminsterian policies adopted after its independence (CIA Fact book, 2010). The economy has allowed for partnerships in long democratic tradition, which supports an employee relations climate where equal and interdependent roles of the employees at the workplace are recognised.

The country's economy has evolved from a monocrop agricultural sector to a more diversified economy over the years. Meade<sup>1</sup> (1961) asserted that the economy was doomed to failure under such a frail economic system. He explained how a galloping population figure rated against the limited resources of the country would certainly lead to an economic failure (Frankel, 2009). Popular writer and Nobel Prize Winner, Naipaul, stated Mauritius as the overcrowded baracoon (1973) by underlying that the country could not effectively face long-term growth with regards to its weak economic system and low living standards during the years following Independence in 1968.

The country's economic improvement has been the result of new political strategies from the early 1980s following the election of a new government in 1982. This was initiated through the input of technology, human resources, innovation as well as strategic orientations that have reshaped the economy. The premises of a modern economy have come from the

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<sup>1</sup> Read Meade's view of Mauritius in 1961 on Page 204

fact that an industrial structure has created a new platform for employee relations which were initially limited to one sector only; the sugar sector. The reason for restructuring is most often a wish or need for increased flexibility, effectiveness and adaptability, stimulated by industrial change and increased demands for competitiveness (Jørgensen & Navrbjerg, 2001). This has been the case for Mauritius where employees moved from the sugar sector to new sectors like textile and tourism.

The Government of Mauritius implemented a new Employment Relations legislation to repeal the former Industrial Relations Act (1973), which is now obsolete in a milieu where the work pattern, technology, pace of work, and so forth are changing more rapidly than ever before. Additionally, there are contemporary issues like globalisation and international competition impacting employee relations. The increasing integration of national economies into the global market is demanding stronger integration of national trade union agendas (Schmidt V, 2007). With these changes, the role and orientation of trade unions in Mauritius has to evolve as well.

Trade unions presently act within a workplace where the dynamics have changed. For example, it has already been seen that trade unions can hardly mobilise employees around them to create the powerful workforce, which made management respond to their demands in the past. Pedersini (2010) considers membership as a key resource for trade unions while being a crucial component of a union's organisational strength and a fundamental element for legitimacy and recognition. This trend, at the international level, is now clearly depicted in Mauritius whereby unions' influence has become marginal over the years following its industrial development. Trade unions come forward with the same agenda of improved pay and improved work conditions, while they are not really in a position to say that their orientation has changed. Dempsey & Brewster (2009) state that unions still bear in mind that

the emotional intelligence that they use in collective bargaining will bring them an opportunity to succeed in their task.

Trade unions have evolved under a paternalistic work structure, both in public and private sector organisations. Trade Unions in Africa are weak organisations with many internal problems (Schillinger, 2005). Trapped between an ongoing deregulation of the African economies on the one hand and the consequences of neo-liberal globalisation on the other, they are quite often seen to be a relict of the past (Schillinger, 2005). They have had enough arguments to bargain with employers in the past like wage rises, job insecurity and worker exploitation.

Today's work pattern is different since employers base their strategies not on their personal aims or orientations but also, to a large extent, on global factors which influence the nature of business. Employers are getting wearier of changes and seem to have put trade unions in a weak position whereby their bargaining power has drastically been reduced (Kamoche, 2004). With globalisation and liberalisation, the Mauritian trade union movement is faced with new challenges. Trade unions can no longer confine themselves to such traditional issues as better conditions of work, but must deal with issues such as globalisation, sustainable industrialisation and the linkage between trade and environment, and related WTO issues (Bhowon, Boodhoo and Chellapermal, 2004). This explains their need to broaden their spectrum and seek new concepts that are successfully applied elsewhere.

### **Problem Statement**

Trade unions no more enjoy the popularity and credibility that they were entitled to during the first half of the last century, including the 1970s symbolised by the pervasive influence of militancy known as “années de braise” (Betchoo in “L’Express”, 2006). Efforts to weaken trade union influence have been recently witnessed. This phenomenon is worldwide whereby decline has been a common problem facing trade unions in almost all

industrialised economies. Various reasons have been advanced to explain this 'crisis of labour': the changing composition of the labour force, business cycle variables, new patterns of industrial relations, a rise in the power of global capital and a shift from Fordist to flexible modes of production (Dundon, 2002).

In this changing context, the trade unions all over the world have experienced decreasing membership. For example, labour's ranks fell in the United States, Britain, France and Germany, but the sharpest drops - from 21.8 million in 1985 to 14 million in 1995 - took place in Central and Eastern Europe, largely as a result of an end to compulsory unionism (Greenhouse, 1997). In Poland union membership plunged by 46 percent and in the Czech Republic by 51 percent. Unions now have to cope with a more diversified workforce, more complex issues and broader societal concerns such as discrimination, harassment, work and family among others (Government Whitepaper, 2004). In the actual case, the problem lies in the survival of unions in Mauritius because failure to address this problem is likely to weaken their position and make them obsolete if they do not review their strategies. There is a possibility that in private Mauritian firms which are union averse, the tendency will continue. In the public service, union affiliation is open to all employees, which explains that in that particular case unions will not necessarily face many problems. From a global perspective, unions are now considering the importance of reinventing themselves to avoid their decline. Chaumière (2010) commented that the future of trade unions depended on their adaptability and improvement in their functioning. It also depended on their ability to develop healthy relations with employers and the government by re-designing their objectives roles and strategies.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to identify the key strategies that trade unions in Mauritius could adopt in order to better face the future. Data were obtained using surveys

from participants both from unionised public and private companies. The data were analysed using GraphPad software to assess means from both public and private samples and find out commonalities or diversion from the suggested strategy. The scope of the study was within Mauritius and included working professionals. The participants were drawn a sample of nearly hundred employees - 70 for government and 28 from private companies in a near estimated ratio of 2:1.

The practice of employment relations has benefited immensely from theoretical frameworks of leading theorists in the field of industrial relations. It has been observed that despite the criticisms levelled against some of these theories they have stood the test of time and have contributed immensely to scholarship and practice. Among these theories, there are areas of commonalities and differences as could be deduced from the comparative analysis. In Unitarianism, the organisation is perceived as an integrated and harmonious whole with the ideal of “one happy family”, where management and other members of the staff all share a common purpose, emphasising mutual cooperation. Holders of unitary beliefs rely on the ‘liberal use of team or family metaphors’ (Fox, 1974) when conceptualising the nature of the employment relationship. The unitary perspective is characterized by an emphasis on cooperative relations at work.

In pluralism the organisation is perceived as being made up of powerful and divergent sub-groups, each with its own legitimate loyalties and with their own set of objectives and leaders. In particular, the two predominant sub-groups in the pluralistic perspective are the management and trade unions. At the heart of the pluralist position is a conviction that the employment relationship embraces two equally legitimate sets of interests, those of employers and those of employees (Heery et al, 2008). Trade unions could in fact be channelled towards evolution and positive change. This explains the background of the study which emphasises the importance of the pluralistic approach to employee relations.

### **Conceptual Framework of the Study**

After continual progress of trade union membership in Mauritius between 1930 and 1980, union density levels in public and private unions declined somewhat during the 1980s when industrialisation went through its first phase. This decline could be aligned with Dobbins' (2001) evaluation of union decline in Ireland where a combination of factors have contributed to this fall, including: the expansion in new, non-unionised, sectors of the economy, the growth of atypical forms of employment such as part-time and contract work, the changes in state policy towards trade unions; and a general hardening of employer attitudes towards union activity. The parallel could be drawn in Mauritius with its developing economy like new industries in the private sector like textile, financial services and the seafood hub (MCB Focus, 2012).

Carley (2012) points out that the long-term decline in the number of unions is due mainly to the extinction of unions because the jobs or industries they organised have largely disappeared. In the Mauritian case, a traditional and highly-organised sugar sector is replaced by the above-mentioned emerging sectors. Moreover, unions themselves have not yet been able to penetrate effectively the new expanding sectors of the economy. To this end, they will have to develop strategies to better face current challenges at the workplace.

The decline of union density brings real challenges for trade unions throughout the world and it pushes them to look for creative and efficient forms of reorganising in order to keep defending the rights and needs of the workers (Hachmann, 2011). In this context, it becomes relevant to investigate the successful actions used by unions to increase membership; to understand how they change and adapt in terms of structure and culture; to explore the innovating and prosperous examples on collective bargaining, among others.

A useful strategy to develop membership is to provide opportunities for female empowerment by addressing them important roles within unions. Kainer (2006) states that

union revival represents an opportunity of promoting women, broadening the constituency base and rethinking labour's political agenda in a view of equity framework.

Fewer but efficient unions in Mauritius could be another useful strategy to consider. The primary aim of the rationalisation process must be to reduce the number of unions in each industry and to develop structures that will enable unions to co-operate one with the other to expand areas of union coverage to those sections of the workforce currently not organised (Australian Trade Union Congress, 1993). In this context, unions might be able to develop greater synergy and improve their bargaining power.

Additionally, the bargaining power of leaders could be an important strategy that unions should consider in the coming era. If the leadership of an organisation is able to recognize the differences among the members and recognise the range of interests represented in the membership, the collective power of the organisation can be directed toward the areas of common concern. The bargaining process provides an opportunity to address a wide range of concerns within a strategy of common interest. If the voices of all subgroups of the organisation are heard, the collective voice of the membership is more powerful (Rainsberger, 2012).

Innovation through modern communications remains another useful strategy regarding the future of unions. In an era of digital communications, unions must abide by latest technological changes to better communicate with their members. Dauda (2002) states that effective employee relation system encourages individual and group commitments to excellence and help in creating favourable environment for innovation to take place. The fact that organisations are subjected to constant change makes it imperative for both management individual employees and trade unions to constantly evaluate the relevance and achievement of the organisation's vision at all times.

Globalisation, as a union strategy, has proved a complex and multi-faceted process for workers around the world, as are the strategies they must develop to face its challenges.

Schmidt (2007) explains that the increasing integration of national economies in a single global market and the appearance of new world production systems are demanding stronger coordination of national and international trade union agendas. This is a big challenge for trade unions that traditionally organise within a national context. The research will explain why globalisation must be on the agenda of unions as key long-term strategy.

Mauritian employers have voiced social partnership as an opportunity to bring employees closer and work in better harmony within the workplace. The Law Reform paper (2009) in its Social partnership framework mentioned that such partnership and dialogue amongst the sectors should be rooted in “benefit to the society” rather than ‘mutual benefit to the partners’ and should centre on the concept of equity.

Additionally, the objectives of ‘social partnership’ was taken to include the enhancement of the prosperity and success of the enterprise, the engagement of all stakeholders’ ideas, abilities and commitment and the creation of a basis for arrangements for discussion of major decisions affecting the organisation’s future (Partnership 2000, 2012). The incidence of such co-operative arrangements has been significant, and for many commentators they are regarded as an important and credible means for enhancing union and employee voice in management decision-making (Geary, 2008). The argument is too see whether social partnership will impact positively in the Mauritian context given the skepticism of union representatives on various platforms.

### **Research Design**

The sample comprised employees between 23 and 55 years working in various government departments including private sector employees working in sectors like shipping, manufacturing and white-collar private sector occupations Stratified random sampling



technique was used. Once the sample characteristics were defined, the sample would be randomly chosen to avoid researcher bias. The researcher and the fieldworkers who acted as research assistants conducted a survey. The survey was essentially a questionnaire since it was appropriate in gaining information and was practical for the purposes of data collection from source.

Statistical techniques along with computer-generated solutions (where applicable) formed the basis of gaining data and making inferences. Descriptive statistics helped to summarise the sample data. Numerical descriptors included mean and standard deviation for continuous data types (like preferences), while frequency and percentage will be more useful in terms of describing categorical (like gender).

A mixed methodology allowed the researcher to allow both qualitative and quantitative questions to be answered. Likert scales were used to gather responses ranging from less satisfactory to very satisfactory while open-ended questions allowed room for getting both factual and open or interpretive information. Regarding the mixed methodology, Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) have argued convincingly for the use of mixed methodologies in order for researchers to present a multi-dimensional, and therefore more illuminating, set of results. This approach better suited the needs of this study.

### **Research Questions**

#### **Quantitative questions**

Question 1: What is the extent to which contemporary strategic HRM (human resource management) strategies are understood and practised by Mauritius trade unions?

Question 2: Which key HRM strategies help improve union performance in Mauritius?

Question 3: What is the relationship between strategic HRM strategies and union performance in Mauritius?

#### **Follow-up qualitative questions**

1. What are the common characteristics of trade unions in Mauritius?
2. How do these characteristics affect trade unions in today's employee relations' context?
3. What are the approaches that trade union leaders need to have in the future?
4. Which types of strategies are best suited for trade unions in the current employee relations context?

### **Assumptions, Limitations and Delimitations**

#### **Assumptions**

In the course of the study, the researcher considered that trade unions had declined in the current context. The findings pertaining to trade union strategies were considered standard for all industries and locations. This is not always true because each sector, public or private, in Mauritius has certain specific differences. For instance, the characteristics of unions in public companies may be slightly or significantly different from those found in private companies, since the way in which they are organised is different in structure and membership terms.

There was also the assumption that respondents had sufficient knowledge of unions and those who responded the questions were in full capacity of understanding the problem issues facing unions. Since fieldworkers were hired for the study and subject to payment for each questionnaire that they used with respondents, the researcher confirmed that the questions were correctly addressed and answered by them. The questionnaires once filled were returned to the researcher who crosschecked all of them and manually input information to the software programme for the examination of the results. Regarding the questionnaire itself, there were more questions that were formatted under Likert Scale and these allowed respondents to choose from more than a single opinion on various questions asked to them.

The researcher estimated that building on the premises of a suitably designed sample and a large number of questionnaires (nearly 100) that were distributed, the margin of error or inaccuracy would be diminished compared with a sample size that would be leaner.

## **Limitations**

The participants of the study were employed workers both from public and private organisations. Their opinions could have been biased depending upon the sector where they worked. Public organisations were heavily unionised compared with private organisations which were very little unionised. Although the researcher used a mixed approach and hoped to understand the problem linked with trade unions on decline, there was a risk the team members would misrepresent their personal characteristics and attributes due to self-reference criterion.

Participants could also have answered the questions subjectively by refereeing to centrality in Likert Scale questions but these were verifiable from quantitative data and correlations that were obtained. The researcher's experiences allowed him develop a suitable sample with respondents that were capable of answering questions. The Panel of Expert Opinion was also able to confirm the findings of the researcher coupled with existing literature review both in Mauritius and in selected international environments.

## **Delimitations**

There were variables that could be under the control of the researcher. For instance, the sample was developed from respondents who were full-time government and private sector employees with a minimum of three years' working experience. There was a guarantee that responses would be of reasonable quality since employed people are capable of understanding issues that relate to unions. The other key factor was age. Since the respondents were within the age group 22-50, it was a sample of new and experienced employees. This experimentation allowed a span of ideas and responses both from new recruits and experienced workers.

Since the size of respondents is around 100 (96-98 depending on responses per question), this study addressed both the white-collar and blue-collar jobs although there were

a lesser percentage of respondents from this category (33%). This was available from the general administrative and the shipping sector. The researcher reserved the right to say that his study focused on employees who could respond to the questionnaire in English and some clarifications were made in French. This interview style allowed for suitable interpretation of questions with minimal rejection in case if respondents could not answer or denied from responding to particular questions.

The study took place in Mauritius with samples chosen from various government bodies known as ministries regarding employees in the public sector. Location was centralised in Port Louis, the capital city of Mauritius. Fieldworkers in decentralised locations different of the Ministries also used a set of questionnaires. Regarding private sector employees, some 60% of respondents were in Port Louis while the remaining was located in key areas in Plaines Wilhems region. My own part-time Human Resource students offered me the chance to have a fairly good coverage of public respondents where they participated a little in handling one or two questionnaires to their colleagues working in the public service.

### **Significance of the Study**

Today's workplace situation has been compounded by the development of a "single employer" system of employment law in recent decades, which has served to make employers in unorganised industries more hostile to unions (Wright, 2011). Unions may have to demonstrate that they can "add value" to a firm's competitiveness in order to dampen employer resistance. Unions also meet considerable challenges in representing certain groups of workers in today's labour market. While overall membership decline has slowed in recent years, the vast majority of younger workers and new labour market entrants are not joining unions. These new realities make it all the more important for unions to develop innovative organising and bargaining strategies.

Labour unions are confronted with the necessity to change and to adapt and are exposed to problems of economical puzzles, legal requirements, technology and financial issues. Unions must keep up with changes, such as increasing diversity in the workplace, more women in the working environment, a focus shift to competence and capability, productivity, growing socio-economical problems, responsibilities, training and development (Ceronie, 2007; Uys and Linde, 2011). Furthermore, unions must face challenges such as shrinking membership numbers, financial obligations and the outflow or “brain drain” of our knowledge base (Ceronie, 2007; Uys and Linde, 2011).

This research, which has not been so far undertaken in Mauritius in a comprehensive way, has its significance in that it attempts to highlight what unions in Mauritius could do to maintain themselves as partner of employee relations in the years to come. Unions will have to adapt to changes in the workplace environment. Regarding female empowerment, as one strategy developed in this research, the representation of women’s interests in union decision-making, particularly in collective bargaining policy, still lag behind (Ebbinghaus, 2002). This study explains that women must be given better chances to address within their unions.

Additionally, social partnership, a new concept, has more importance now than ever before and must be properly dealt with. Governments in the late 1990s used the principle of mutual gains through cooperation between workers and managers to encourage unions to sign voluntary ‘partnership agreements’ with employers. This approach assumed that cooperation would produce more efficient working practices (Terry, 2003). In a nutshell, Wright (2010) concludes that unions will doubtless continue to play a constructive and valuable role in representing workers, but the rapidly shifting contours of the labour market mean that their capacity to regulate labour standards in the future is likely to rely on the development of innovative strategies along these lines.

Various studies have found that unions continue to be the most effective mechanisms for representing worker interests, and also that non-union mechanisms produce limited benefits for management in terms of productivity (Heery, 2010). As such, the significance of this study purports the importance of unions in a developing country like Mauritius and considers that the development of strategies in the employee relations' discipline might assist them in the future.

### **Summary and Transition**

This chapter gave an overview of the problem issue that has been affecting trade unions in Mauritius in the present era. It has tried to explain where their problem lies and why this research is useful in justifying how such organisations can better approach future challenges. Literature survey in the forthcoming chapter will assist in developing key issues that affect trade unions both locally and internationally. It will also focus on the Employment Relations Act 2008 and will analyse the key issues that cover employment rights. It will further discuss trade unions concerns within the ER context and see how they will have to establish potential strategies for survival.

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

### **Trade Unions in the new employee relations climate**

It was firstly important to place the challenge facing trade unions by briefly addressing the Employment Relations Act 2008<sup>2</sup> which forms the background of the research as a result of its relevancy in addressing the research issue. The literature survey initially introduced the perspectives of unionisation with three different views like the Marxist, Unitary and the Pluralistic perspective. It stressed that Mauritius, being an open-market economy, was better placed at adopting the Pluralistic perspective regarding trade unions and labour-management relations. This practice had been favoured since the inception of labour relations in Mauritius and remains unchanged in the contemporary context.

### **Strategy for searching the literature**

Since the research focused on the dynamics that trade unions play in the existing employee relations climate, it was essential to first portray the Employment Relations Act 2008 (ERA) as a backdrop of the research. This legal enforcement, presently a full-fledged labour act, has a direct impact on the work environment of the Mauritian society.

The second part of the literature review considered the evolution of trade unions. It initially identifies the main types of unions that exist in Mauritius and abroad. The review further explains how unions have evolved, and particularly, emphasises the 1970s when Marxism was at its peak in Mauritius. The researcher considered it relevant to introduce these concepts taking into consideration that such framework effectively guided the literature from a general perspective into a more scientifically focused one.

The Survey then covered a critical aspect of trade unionism illustrated through the industrialisation of the Mauritian economy in the early 1980s followed by an improvement in living standards along with a spectacular growth of the domestic economy. In a situation of

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<sup>2</sup> The ERA is the employment legislation in force in Mauritius since 2008 and it underpins the dissertation and its problem issues. It replaced the former Industrial Relations Act 1973.

economic boom and full employment, trade unions find out that their power is on relative decline and that affiliation of members has the tendency to decline. This pattern is followed globally and Mauritius is no exception to such a principle.

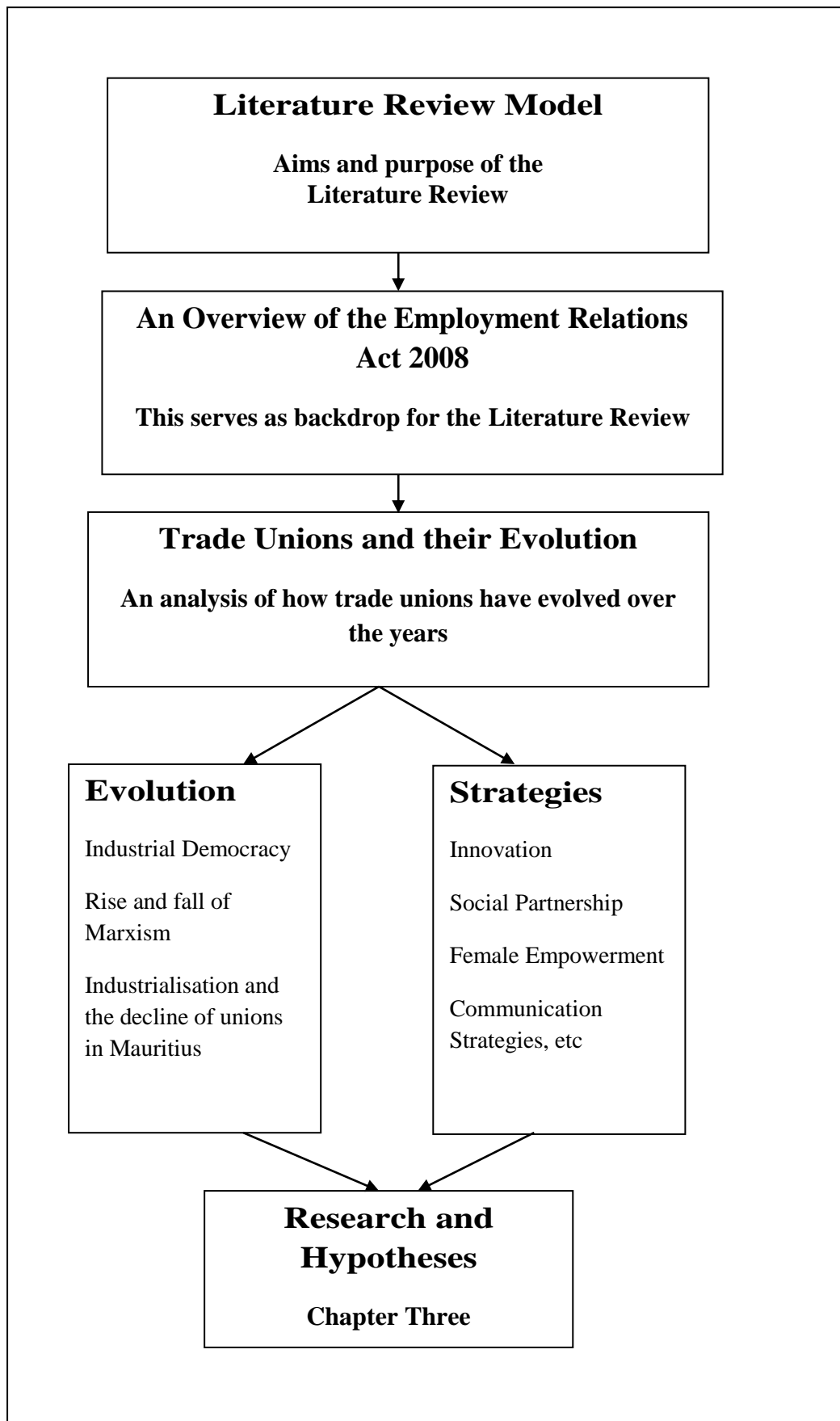
The Literature Review next analysed the various reasons that have led to the decline of unionisation throughout the Mauritian industry. It explains how the introduction of technology, the development of the services sector, the loss of charismatic leadership and a lack of innovation of trade unions have led to the decline of popularity of unions in Mauritius, not necessarily its membership.

In the final part of the review, the researcher made a global survey of how trade unions in international environments are reviewing their agendas. It was seen that an opening to the global environment, female empowerment, innovation in communication strategies, a more socially-oriented role of trade unions followed by better negotiation through bipartite or collective bargaining are essential for union survival. All these tactics needed to be supported by genuine social dialogue as unions survive by communicating to their members and stakeholders.



Table 1:

*Model of Literature Review*



The Employment Relations Act 2008 mentions that neither management nor trade unions can alone promote and maintain a harmonious employment relations climate. Management and trade unions should be engaged constructively and be committed to develop the necessary conditions conducive to harmonious employment relations at the workplace.

This argument favours management and trade unions shall address employment relations and human resource management issues in a spirit of openness, trust, honesty, mutual respect and understanding. Management and trade unions shall adopt the right mindset to address conflict with a view to reaching a win-win situation through compromise or consensus, wherever possible. Alongside, both parties should be recognised as social partners on the same footing. A balance of power between management and trade unions is therefore essential for harmonious workplace relations.

### **An overview of theories on Employee Relations**

There are three major perspectives that contrast in their approach to the nature of workplace relations. The three views are: the Unitary, Pluralist and Marxist perspectives. Each offers a particular perception of workplace relations and will therefore interpret such events as workplace conflict, the role of trade unions and job regulation in a different way.

The Unitary perspective regards the organisation as an integrated group of people with one loyalty structure and unified by a common purpose. It means that there are no barriers between different groups and departments which could lead to poor communication and animosity, which would go against the notion of common values and common goals as that would not be advantageous to the common goal, of the success of the organisation. It is characterised by an integrated group of people, centralised authority and loyalty structure and a group of people have common values and interest. Furthermore, unitary perspective accepts that organisations only exist in perfect harmony and conflicts are not necessary (Salamon, 1992). However, the unitary approach however cannot easily accommodate non-conforming

individuals. Unitary managers do not accept differing viewpoints, criticism of organisational norms and universal directions and people who are unwilling to be absorbed into the whole. Moreover, although trade unions try to balance the unfair empowerment, the organisations still insist to wipe off the presence of trade unions, because trade unions are threats for organisations to build up employees' loyalty. The unitary perspective seems to be more suitable for nineteenth-century, while the pluralist perspective seems to be appropriate for contemporary society (Rose, 2004). The organisations are characterised by a widespread distribution of authority, ownership separated and political and industrial conflict separated.

The Marxist perspective has been a tendency which prefers to focus on the politics of a society, according to Marx's theory, while both unitary perspective and pluralist perspective pay attention on industrial relations inside organisations. Marxist perspective criticises the capitalist society and its system of production, distribution and exchange (Blyton and Turnbull, 2004). The critical analysis of the Marxist perspective includes social, political and economic structure. This perspective has broader range than the other two perspectives since it not only analyse the relations in organisations, but also in social, political and economic terms. There are some assumptions made by Marxist perspective. Firstly, social class conflict promotes the society development. Without the social class conflict, society may stagnate. Additionally, the distribution of economic power is not equal to the different class, so it causes the class conflict. Thirdly, the inequality is between the people who own the capital or materials and others who supply and sell their labour. Furthermore, the society's social and political regulations are based on the economic inequality. And finally, the social and political conflict is an expression of underlying economic conflict (Rose, 2004). The unequal division between who own the capital in the organisations and who sell their labour causes conflict, and Marxism believes conflict is constant and inherent within the employee relationship. In this case, within capitalism society, this kind of conflict is unavoidable and

inherent, and also the political and social conflict and would result in revolution and the ascendancy of socialism over capitalism. The employees' salaries would be minimised to a subsistence level. Ultimately Marxists believe the only way resolve the conflict would be the abolition of capitalism. Trade unions, as a product of the conflict, may focus on the expression and protection of proletariat class. As a part of political process, trade union may gain the basic changes in the nature of economic and social systems.

The Pluralist perspective regards organisation as combination of composed of a variety of sectional groups with divergent interests over whom the government tries to maintain some kind of dynamic equilibrium (Blyton and Turnbull, 2004). The organisation is seen as multi-structured in terms of groups, leadership, authority and loyalty. The two main groups in Pluralist perspective are workers and managers. Because the different position these two groups stand, the purposes for working are different. In this case, conflicts are inevitable and legitimate, which due to the disagreement such as pay, working conditions, bonuses and working hours (Blyton and Turnbull, 2004). Pluralists believe that the interests of their employees compete with the organisations interest. For instance, workers want higher salaries or better working conditions, but organisations need to reduce the cost in order to maximise the profit. Pluralist perspective managers recognise the conflict; hence they try to solve the conflict by appropriate methods, for example, negotiation and bargaining and sharing decision-making information.

In Mauritius, the appropriate perspective should be pluralist perspective. All employees and employers have their own interests about work. Due to this reason, employees may not have common goal with employers. So conflict will appear. Unitary perspective regards conflict as irrational activities. That means unitary managers do not accept employees who has different working goals. Unitary perspective can only exist in ideal conditions (Rose, 2004). The pluralist ideology reflects organisational and social changes happening in the mid-

twentieth century to late twentieth century and extending into twenty-first century. This means that unitary perspective is less important and used more rarely in recent organisations (Rose, 2004). According to the Involvement and Participation Association (2002), Pluralists believe that such differing interest can be managed to avoid open conflict and can be channelled to produce more positive outcomes.

Moreover, in the 1970s and 1980s, the employee relations' climate in the Mauritius gave considerable attention to their pluralistic, union-management policies, since pluralist perspective is a pragmatic, effective alternative to the Unitarist perspective. According to the Pluralist perspective, authority is controlled by the mass of population, rather than by a small leader group. Mauritius is a traditional country that focuses on the human rights. In this situation, the reason why the pluralist perspective is appropriate for Mauritius could be argued as follows (Blyton and Turnbull, 2004). The pluralist perspective illustrates that if a majority of people do not like what their representatives or leaders are doing, they may make the representatives or leaders resignation through voting at the next election. Blyton and Turnbull (2004) state that the Pluralist perspective insists that employees could join in interest groups such as pressure groups and trade unions in order to protect this kind of authority.

### **Creating a new work environment under the ERA**

Broadly, the new Employment Relations Act does not represent a fundamental change in approach to industrial relations but attempts in some ways to look into matters that were not well covered in the past and where corrective action was not initiated. Accordingly, it has opened the doors for the possibility to negotiate a well-defined group of elements forming the essence of the contract of employment (Appleby, 2009). It does not therefore represent a dramatic change from the Industrial Relations Act 1973 (IRA) but serves as an opportunity to review the former legislation with the new workplace environment.

The new Employment Relations Act comes in as a salutary initiative since it considers the human dimension of the work environment. Bryson (2011) views that if management–employee relations are a workplace attribute, one would expect a high degree of agreement about the state of those relations in a particular workplace.

Rather than assuming that rules should be promulgated in a mechanistic and bureaucratic environment, the ERA seeks opportunities to transform the human resource management philosophy in Mauritius. The ERA Report 2008 suggests that the new Act is basically transitory in nature with improvements brought in several areas. The credit goes to recognising trade unionism, consolidating worker rights while extending opportunities for better productivity through some reengineering of sick and casual leaves (Week-End, 2010).

Trade unions will have their part to play although they must clearly accept that an employee-focused industrial relations strategy is far better than a profit-based or productivity-based one. Workers' perceptions of management–employee relations depend on practices and structures underpinning the relationship between management and employees (both collectively and individually) as well as individuals' own work experiences (Katz et al., 1985). The new legislation is not free from shortcomings and criticism but the replacement of the former IRA remains a positive effort to give a face-lift to industrial relations in a contemporary context. So far, the essence of the change remains a good initiative although some refinement through representation and debate deserve to be encouraged in this democratic workplace environment of that Mauritius boasts within sub-Saharan Africa. The new Employment Relations Act does not come forward as a paradigm shift in industrial relations. The Act therefore marks the beginning of a new era in approach to the principles underpinning the employment laws of Mauritius (Appleby, 2009). It rather considers changes in a subtle way while bringing in some modifications, which fit in the contemporary context of industrial relations. The ER Act is compiled as a comprehensive 700-page document.

### **Key provisions of the Employment Relations Act 2008**

#### **The Need to Create a Worker Trade Union**

The ERA stipulates that the principal aim of trade unions of workers is to promote their members' interests. This can be only achieved if the undertakings in which their members are employed prosper. They have therefore an interest in co-operating in measures taken to promote efficiency. Employees are invited to share with management the responsibility for good employment relations.

Trade unions of workers shall therefore:

- where appropriate, jointly with individual management, maintain effective arrangements for negotiation, consultation, communication and settling of grievances and disputes
- maintain effective arrangements at industry or other levels for settling disputes and for negotiating terms and conditions of employment
- take all reasonable steps to ensure that their officers and members abide by collective agreements and agreed procedures; and
- maintain effective procedures for resolving particular issues with other trade unions and make full use of any procedures established for settling inter-union disputes.

From this standpoint, the compelling nature of creating trade unions is stressed in the ERA. This is already an invitation for industrial democracy since the Act duly considers that trade unions need to be developed within organisations. If union representation remains adequate at the public sector level, little can be said of genuine representation in the private sector where only 25% of the workforce is unionised (Statistics Mauritius, 2008). Certain elements already define the relevance of collective bargaining, dispute settlement and negotiations once trade unions are set up in any organisation. This also represents the dynamics that the research will analyse in the later chapters.

According to the ERA, trade unions of workers must ensure that their officers: (a) understand the organisation, policies and rules of their trade union; (b) understand their rights and obligations; and (c) are adequately trained to look after their members' interests in an efficient and responsible way.

### **The Proactive Nature of Trade Unions**

The Employment Rights Act 2008 stated that trade unions must approach employment relations issues in a proactive manner with a view to improving the conditions of employment of workers whilst preserving jobs and supporting job creation (ERA 2008). Patmore et al. (2002) state that trade unions currently play a very significant role in the representation of employees. The effectiveness of their representation depends on their internal governance and on how effectively they can externally represent the interests of their members, particularly in relation to enterprise bargaining.

Trade unions have been advised to broaden their scope and place new issues, such as occupational safety and health, performance related pay (PRP) schemes, productivity, technological and organisational innovation, flexibility, training, employability and enterprise competitiveness in their programme. Unions' effects will depend on their ability to do what they have traditionally done, namely bargain on behalf of their members using their ability to restrict the supply of labour as a bargaining tool, and to act as the representative voice of workers to management (Freeman and Medoff, 1984). This was so far neglected by unions which were concerned with their own priority areas like compensation and worker rights. Assuming that the former orientation was limited in aspect, the ERA promulgates new and emerging issues that are now gaining more interest from all the stakeholders concerned. Trade unions, according to the new legislation, must take a broader economic perspective when negotiating at industry level. Unions will have to favour social dialogue and avoid confrontation. They shall be proactive in addressing labour problems and endeavour to pre-



empt conflicts at the workplace (ERA 2008). According to Schmidt (2003), trade unions are campaigning for the implementation of an effective national and international framework of rules and standards to ensure good corporate governance and wider market integrity, along with regulatory systems to ensure effective implementation and enforcement.

Too often, legislators have witnessed the risk that exists when negotiation is inefficiently guided. Confrontation alone is unproductive since it undermines the good effort that the main stakeholders, employers and employees, must take to come to agreement when problems have to be solved. Social dialogue and the “entente” that both parties wish in the negotiation process should be encouraged. This is where reactive behaviour can be transformed into more conducive pro-active attitudes that trade unions can develop. Trade unions will have to consider industrial action as a last resort. The unions should be engaged in the capacity building of their members for more effective participation in discussions at the workplace and in national social dialogue forum. According to the social partnership model, participants in a business enterprise have both an economic and a social function (Flynn, 1999). At heart, the social partnership model promotes consultative arrangements to achieve social, economic and cultural objectives.

Capacity building, in this situation, represents something different from what is usually voiced. Under the ERA, capacity building is viewed as a means of diverting energy in a more concrete form like choosing participation in lieu of confrontation.

**The contribution of the Employment Relations Act 2008 to key issues that the  
Dissertation addresses**

The ERA 2008, being a comprehensive document may highlight certain important points that are worth considering for the dissertation. The researcher wanted to find out potential issues that needed to be addressed in the dissertation. The first critical factor could

be Innovation because unions had been since long criticised not to be in phase with developments taking place at the societal level.

### **Innovation**

Regarding Innovation in this new employment relations pattern, more responsibilities are devolved on the Ministry, trade unions and employers' organisation.

The ERA 2008 proposed that:

- (a) capacity of the trade unions be reinforced so as to improve their negotiating skills and enhance their understanding of key labour market issues for a more professional and objective intervention;
- (b) the employees be encouraged to improve human resource management practices and professional skills in conflict resolution and develop corporate social responsibility strategies.

In essence, the ERA challenges the idea that unions must be more conversant with labour market issues and adopt professional intervention. Unions may play a role in negotiating on behalf of their members over the nature of a workplace innovation. Worker well-being may be viewed as a public good, that is, a good affecting the well-being of everyone in such a way that one individual's partaking of the good does not preclude others from doing so.

Without a union, individuals will lack the incentive to pursue public goods (Freeman and Medoff, 1984). This might depend upon the way in which unions are expected to act in the near future.

### **Empowerment of Women**

The ERA 2008 does not explicitly call for a participation of women but the legislation (ERA) considers the relevance of including women to participate in union activities.

Martens et al (2006) confirm that there is a general misconception concerning the role and importance of women in unions and other social activities, and generally women tend to

think that the matters concern men only. Martens et al (2006) further explained that various cultural influences barred women from participating in social and trade union activities. The family commitment hardly spared time for social and union activities even though women might have been personally willing to participate. Traditional attitudes tended to hinder women from obtaining the support of their family and parents to participate in trade union activities, which were considered to be a man's world.

### **Globalisation**

Under tremendous pressure of macroeconomic change under globalisation, the island economy currently faces a tremendous challenge of turning the economy around, in order to sustain the past development achievement, while also boosting economic growth and creating decent and productive employment opportunities for all (Obote, 2008). Schmidt (2003) advocates that the promotion and implementation of international labour standards is an important tool to achieve a fair globalisation. A strong and unified trade union movement, with a vision of social justice for all, coherent concepts for social and economic policy, effective collective bargaining and a modern and inclusive form of trade union structures, are key prerequisites to achieving this objective.

The Government of Mauritius has recognised that the current paradoxical labour market situation of high unemployment on the one hand and a long list of vacancies on the other is a result of labour market rigidities imposed in the past. In particular, it has been recognised that, for several decades, the wage determination system and labour laws were biased in favour of protecting jobs, rather than protecting workers, of protecting the rights of the employed, rather than the rights of the unemployed.

This leads to explaining that the global situation is a key issue that has to be considered in the new Employee Relations climate. The ERA supports the argument with Circulatory Migration which encourages the placement of Mauritian employees in an

international environment whereby basic skills could be earned as well as an opportunity for employment. By working in a high-income location with better earnings and spending in low-income, low-cost countries, the migrant worker is able to realise the best capabilities for both themselves and their families (Newland, 2009). Unions, per se, need to appreciate the impending effects of globalisation upon their workforce.

### **Social Partnership**

The ERA 2008 mentions the term “social partnership” without detailing how it would be relevant in the current employee relations climate. The term “social partners”<sup>2</sup> has been much used by employers and union leaders in a nuance but the latter consider it to be an approach to buy workers.

The Law Reform Commission of Mauritius (LRC) in its issue paper on Social Partnership Framework (2009) considered that, in the advent of implementing a new employment legislation, the setting up of an institutionalised framework would constitute the recognition of the complementary roles of the sectors in the socio-economic development of the country, and that it was fundamental to the development of a democratic, socially inclusive society. Voluntary and community groups, as independent, not-for-profit organisations, including unions, could bring distinctive value to society and fulfil a role that is distinct from both the state and the market (Law Reform Commission, 2009). They enabled individuals to contribute to public life and the development of their communities by providing the opportunity for voluntary action. In doing so, they engaged the skills, interests, beliefs and values of individuals and groups.

### **Leadership**

Adebisi (2011) states that one of the key challenges facing trade union organisations today in Africa is that of leadership structure and the politics of succession. In its basic form, a trade union organisation is not a democratic structure due to its methods of succession as far

as leadership is concerned. Trade union organisations constitute integral part of the societies as representatives of the workers. The structural pattern of a trade union organisation is essentially bureaucratic, rigid and non-democratic. According to one of the leading theoretical exponents or authorities of formal organisations, trade union organisations, like all forms of formal organisations are subject to an iron law of oligarchy (Michels, 1915). Adebisi (2011) comments that union democracy clearly requires adequate scope for all categories of members to shape the priorities and programmes of their organisations. It also requires appropriate structures for participation, involvement and self-activity at rank-and-file level.

### **Fewer but efficient Unions -A Key Issue in the Employment Relations Act 2008**

The Employment Relations Act 2008 covers legislation where all employers and employees have a right to be member of trade unions (vcampus, 2012). Trade unions must be registered. Once more, the Constitution protects the fundamental rights of the individuals because every worker shall have the right to join or not to join a trade union, take part in all its activities, serve as a trade union member and take part as an officer of the union.

Two or more trade unions may amalgamate to form a trade union and two or more unions may form a federation and two or more federations may form a confederation by resolution approved in accordance with the rules of the individual unions; in the case of a federation and the rules of each federation in the case of a confederation. All federations and confederations shall be registered. The Australian Council for trade Unions (ACTU, 1993) considers the primary aim of the rationalisation process must be to reduce the number of unions in each industry and to develop structures that will enable unions to co-operate one with the other to expand areas of union coverage to those sections of the workforce currently not organised.

The perspective of amalgamating unions has become more of a necessity under the present employment situation. While the ERA 2008 underpins the creation of unions for the

benefit of employees, it would also be useful to see whether this effort would promote the multiplication of unions within certain sectors. ACTU (1993) estimates that single union coverage is not appropriate for all industries. In some industries multiple-union coverage will remain. There may be a place for differing unions covering the administrative and clerical, production and maintenance and in some cases professional areas.

The argument would stand good for sectors not previously benefiting from unions but this might look less attractive for government organisations that already have a union or federation. For example, in Australia, Congress views the operation of competing bargaining units within enterprise or industry sectors as counter-productive to the aims of the trade union movement to improve living standards (ACTU, 1993). Unions must act co-operatively within a single bargaining unit to maximise the benefits of union membership for workers. The importance of federation in unionisation could also explain the need to have fewer large unions than small, discrete, independent and weak unions. This could undermine union activity at the societal level.

### **Views of the main stakeholders on the ERA 2008**

#### **Employers' View of the New Legislation**

To understand the views of both employers and employees in employee relations, the researcher has taken excerpts from Week-End newspaper (2008) to highlight how both parties viewed the Employment Relations Act 2008 at the moment it was promulgated by the Ministry of Labour and Industrial relations. As an ethical consideration in a dissertation, the names of people are withheld.

Employer's viewed that new legal enforcements would help introduce flexi security through the Workfare programme. There would be better possibilities for employees to become more mobile and employable. Employers had been arguing that there should be

collaboration of the different social partners to ensure that work will run smoothly in the long run (Week-End, 2008).

An employer representative suggested that it would be wrongful to consider the ERA to be in favour of employers only. Employment law is meant to safeguard the interest of employees. Despite collective agreements, the employer union found it difficult to allow existing systems to remain operational (Week End, 2008). The two options that they are suggesting are different: either employers allow for collective bargaining or they can continue with their restrictive practices.

The Mauritius Times newspaper (2012) under the title: Obliterating Labour's Legacy stated that unions had come out with statements to the effect that no prior discussion involving them was held when introducing those amendments in the legislations. They had also claimed that the amendment proposals were in line with earlier proposals made by the employer side (and previously rejected), notably the Mauritius Sugar Producers Association and the Mauritius Employers Federation (Mauritius Times, 2012). They were of the view that this could be a backdoor device being used by employers and the Ministry to neutralise unions by facilitating variation of collective agreements by employers alone. Employees interpreted powers being given to a collective of workers signing up an agreement binding all workers as a ploy to weaken trade unions.

Employers admitted that the economy of Mauritius needed to adapt itself in accordance with global competition. The country should benefit from new employee relations framework to assist in investment, creation and maintenance of more mobile but productive and durable jobs (Week-End, 2010). This new parameter for labour relations is less conflicting and more consensual in approach with emphasis laid on dialogue and two-way communication. At a time when Mauritius is aiming to adopt a 24/7-work pattern,

enterprises should understand the relevance of flexibility which favours both employers and the employees.

### **Employees' Views of the New Legislation**

Based on another Week-End's article (2010), the researcher hereby summarises employees' views. Employees have always resented the Employment Relations Act 2008 since its adoption at the workplace. Union leaders stated that a gross historical regression will take place and a serious prejudice will be caused to the working people of the country (Subron et al, 2013). In the first instance, they said that there was no sea change as expected from the previous Industrial Relations Act 1973. Leaders argued that if changes had been stated, they were mainly cosmetic without a clear intention of enhancing employment legislation in favour of the mass of workers. By May 2010, employees' unions, grouped under the National Trade Union Federation, claimed that they would further comment the ERA and wished that it would be repealed and replaced by better legislation (Week End, 2010).

Table 2:

*Summary of major differences between the Industrial Relations Act 1973 and the Employment Relations Act 2008*

<b>Main Issue</b>	<b>IRA 1973</b>	<b>ERA 2008</b>
<b>Collective Bargaining</b>	Not officially recognised.	Recognised as one of the main issues that influences trade unions which favours two parties to discuss.
		A rapid way of recognising trade unions which ensures
<b>Recognition of Trade Unions</b>	Procedural regarding the recognition and listing of trade unions.	protection from discrimination and abuse.



		New sectors like firemen, prison guards recognised.
<b>Right to strike action</b>	No formal recognition made.	Accepted as a last resort after following a series of negotiations.
<b>Industrial dispute</b>	Termination of contracts, mandatory arbitration, Industrial Relations Commission and TAP as existing institutions regarding dispute.	Conciliation and Mediation Council replaces the former boards. Arbitration is not mandatory. Creation of an ER Tribunal
<b>Lay off</b>	Legislation encourages the implementation of prescribed indemnities to retrenched employees.	Employee indemnity is mandatory and the “Workfare Programme” will be introduced to redeploy employees or to empower employees from all sectors.
<b>Employee Rights</b>	Labour Act applicable regarding employee right, employee protection and indemnity	Employment Rights Act established which oversees gender discrimination, minimum age of entry.

By establishing guidelines for enhanced employee relations, government wanted to ensure that there should be more adaptable and fair employee relations which replace the former IRA which was considered as “Damocles sword”<sup>3</sup> by trade unionists and opposition parties. The Act therefore marks the beginning of a new era in approach to the principles underpinning the employment laws of Mauritius (Appleby, 2009). The ERA 2008 should be more pro-active and simpler to implement for effective employee relations.

### **Trade unions and their evolution**

This part of the literature survey considers how trade unions have been evolving over the years and the rationale for the researcher to focus on the importance of trade union strategies in the current context.

Kaufman (2004) suggests that the field of industrial relations was born out of a confluence of events and ideas with the rise of industrial economies and democratic governments. His work stresses on the development of industrial relations in a global context through the spread of greater political democracy and the protection of human rights in all countries. Kaufman (2004) mentioned that the national economies of Africa and the emerging markets recently developed modern industries and the field of industrial relations gained more importance as a consequence.

Employee relations have their roots in the industrial revolution which created the modern employment relationship by developing free labour markets and large-scale industrial organisations with thousands of wage workers (Kaufman, 2004). As society fought against ~~with~~ these massive economic and social changes, labour problems arose. Low wages, long working hours, monotonous and dangerous work, and abusive supervisory practices led to high employee turnover, violent strikes, and the threat of social instability.

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<sup>3</sup> Read as “*Epée de Damoclès*”, a punitive instrument expressed in French language. Another term used was “*loi baillon*” like a repressive legislation. These terms are also inspired from French Socialism affecting French society in 1868.

From an academic perspective, industrial relations were formed at the end of the 19th century as a middle ground between classical economics and Marxism, with *Industrial Democracy* (Webb (1897)<sup>4</sup> being the key intellectual work. Industrial relations rejected the classical icon.

### **Defining Trade Unions**

A trade union or federation is an organisation of workers which, through its leadership, bargains with and negotiates labour contracts with employers on behalf of union members. This may include the negotiation of wages, work rules, complaint procedures, rules governing hiring, firing and promotion of workers, benefits, workplace safety and policies (Webb and Webb, 1920). The agreements negotiated by the union leaders are binding between members and the employer and in some cases on other non-member workers.

Industrial relation theory has tended to assume that trade unions are central to management's field of vision when it comes to employee participation (Ackers, 2004). Wilkinson (2003) stated that most unions asserted a right to mandate that only its members, and no others, might be permitted to work at certain jobs.

Furthermore, the union contract is exclusive with regards to the employer, an employer is generally not permitted to seek out the services of another labour union or hire another competing trade union even if he is dissatisfied with the performance of the current trade union. This assumption is particularly true in public organisations where specialised unions exist within the sector e.g. Government Teachers' Union (GTU) for primary educators or Government General Services Union (GGSU) for the public services. This is less applicable to private companies in Mauritius which are less willing to accommodate unions

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<sup>4</sup> Rare document collections archived and retrieved electronically still having the same impact or influence in workplace relations.

and are freer to deal with different unions like Union of Bus industry Workers (UBIW) for various transport companies.

### **Classification of Trade Unions in Mauritius**

The researcher in his publication- Evolutionary Concepts in HRM (2009) analysed the various types of trade unions that exist in Mauritius and summarises how they have their own affinities.

#### **Craft Unions**

Craft or skill unions were created to represent skilled workers e.g. Sugar Industry Labour Union-Union des Artisans de l'Industrie Sucrière (SILU-UASI). Their existence was important at a time when the Mauritian economy was essentially feudal relying on a lean employer-employee relationship (Betchoo, 2009). These unions were powerful in the past, reached various peaks from the thirties up to the seventies but their power has decreased over the years. In Britain the emergence of Craft unions is often traced to the early days of the Industrial Revolution, while general workers had to wait until the latter half of the nineteenth century (TUC, 1992).

In 2010, craft unions have come once again back to business when employees of the sugar sector were claiming an increase of 20% of their wages. Torul's report (2009) justified the need for such an increase in a tripartite negotiation so as to avoid conflicts with such unions that have momentarily gained impetus. Craft unions are nowadays better represented by the Sugar Industry labour Union.

#### **Industrial Unions**

(TUC, 1992) considers an industrial union as one which recruits members within one industry only and which aspires to recruit all grades of workers in that industry, both manual and non-manual. It is therefore a form of vertical unionism. Industrial unions represent the members of one particular industry e.g. Shop Owner's Union (SOU). The Unions are also

widely represented in the manufacturing sector through the Textile Manufacturing Employees Union (TMEU).

Employee representation is quite low in the private sector in Mauritius but industrial unions remain powerful only when there are drastic changes affecting them. They are keen to gain support from the trade union federations. Industrial unions had representations in 2013 when they demonstrated against the rise in the cost of living in Mauritius (L'Express, 2013). Industrial unions are vulnerable in Mauritius owing to the sector that they represent (textile or manufacturing) and the low level of membership (around 255) that they actually have. Employees' fear to join such unions is a key reason accounting for this figure.

### **General Unions**

(TUC, 1992) describes a general union as one whose area of recruitment is not limited to industrial or occupational categories. It is a union which recruits members from a wide range of industries and occupations. General unions are trade unions which recruit workers from all types of industries and with any level or range of skills e.g. Front Travayer Sektor Privé

These organisations now represent private sector employees long after they were represented by the Front des Travailleurs Unis (FTU) or Front des Progressistes Unis (FPU). The contrast with industrial unions is that general unions can cover more sectors and have a broader appeal than exclusive unions (closed shops) or specialised industrial unions. Even the General Workers Federation, a larger union, defends the interest of such employees.

### **Staff Associations**

These unions represent office workers and those doing white-collar jobs e.g. CEB Staff Union, Mauritius Institute of Education Staff Association, Public Sector Worker's Union. Vitae (2012) defines Staff associations are typically local groupings of staff who organise seminars and social events. Some associations are based in a single subject

discipline, others are more general with the model depending on the institution a number of staff involved.

White-collar unions are numerous in Mauritius since the public sector, being a large organisation, encourages the unionisation of its members to a larger extent than the private sector. White-collar jobs are highly unionised locally. Around 52% of employees are unionised within the first year of joining the public service (CSO, Labour Index, 2010).

### **Trade Union Confederation**

Nearly every country in the world has a national trade union centre or confederation, and many have more than one. The Mauritius Labour Congress is a national trade union centre in Mauritius (ICTUR et al, 2005). It was created in 1963 from a merger of the Mauritius Trades Union Congress and the Mauritius Confederation of Free Trade Unions. The MLC is affiliated with the International Trade Union Confederation. It was founded in 1963 and has around 30,000 members.

Mauritius was a founding member of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in 1995 and belongs to the International Trade Union Confederation, the world's largest trade union federation. According to Nexus Commonwealth Network (2013), the three primary trade unions in the country are the Mauritius Labour Congress (MLC), with about 30,000 members, the Mauritius Trade Union Congress (MTUC), with about 25,000 members, and the National Trade Union Confederation (NTUC), with about 59,000 members (2008). In particular the NTUC tries to influence government decision-making in the best interests of unions and workers and to co-ordinate with trade union movements in other EU countries.

### **Employer Union in Mauritius**

According to Investor's Business Guide (2013), the Mauritius Employers' Federation (MEF) was founded in 1962 and is the vital voice of Mauritian enterprises in all matters, economic and social. It is the largest organisation of the private sector in the country with

more than 1,000 members from all sectors of the economy and all categories of enterprises, small, medium and large. It is a non-profit making organisation and officially represents employers' vis-à-vis the Government and the trade union movements at the sectoral, national and international levels.

Its primary mission is the safeguard and defence of the interests of its members and, by extension, the promotion of free enterprise in Mauritius.

### **The dynamics of employer-employee relations**

It is difficult to ascertain whether or not genuine employee relations really existed in our island in the early days of the twentieth century. Oligarchs ruled the economy because they possessed land provided under lots (*métayage*) by the French Government to French descendants and colonists. There existed basically a master-worker relationship last century even after the abolition of slavery in 1835 (Napal, 1986). This perception persisted even up to the early days of Independence.

### **The Labour Laws of 1878 And 1922**

Napal (1986) in British Mauritius provides an in-depth analysis of labour law and its evolution which is summarised in this section. The labour laws of 1878 were the results of the Old Immigrants Petition drafted by Adolf De Plevitz which had been followed by the Royal Commission of Enquiry into the conditions of the Indians in Mauritius. The laws of 1878 remained in force for nearly 45 years when they were superseded by the labour laws of 1922. The laws of 1878 stipulated that the protector of immigrant had the right to visit the estate where labourers were employed.

They could register complaints and make investigations concerning such complaints, set up legal proceedings and fix up wages according to the requirements. The Protector could examine the Estate books concerning the labourers, work and in case of irregularities to set up action for damage on behalf of the labourers. The labour laws of 1922 seemed to open

new visas, enlarging the horizons of exploited labourers who had to bear all sorts of sufferings at the hands of the planters.

### **Labour Unrest (1937)**

Napal (1986) in British Mauritius commented that Drs Maurice Curé and Edgar Laurent were conscious of the living conditions of the labouring class. Such a category of people had no choice but to live from hand of mouth. Dr Curé was in favour of the introduction of Old Age Pensions Ordinance and the payment of financial assistance to the labourers, referring to the *Traité de Versailles* which stipulated that everything should be done for the welfare of the labouring class. He claimed the setting up of an Advisory Board under the terms of Minimum Wages Ordinance 1934.

The small planters, in the meanwhile, had united themselves and founded a co-operative society but they still depended on mill owners for finance.

Dr Edgar Laurent was of opinion that wages were below the vital minimum because the planters did not treat the labourers with generosity. Dr Curé made petitions both to revise the Constitution which was unfavourable to the common people and labourers who earned very meagre salaries up to 30-40 cents a day (Napal, 1986). Lots of strike action was initiated and the unrest grew very tense. Dissatisfaction on the part of Indian workers and small planters sparked widespread rioting on Mauritius in 1937 and 1943, and a strike in 1938 (Library of Congress, 1998). Incidents took place in several sugar estates and at Union Flacq Estate where four people were shot dead. Sookhoo (2012) posits that this was the Mauritian revolution of the peasantry at the grass root level. The meek and docile Indian now became a political activist.

From this standpoint, industrial relations in Mauritius grew more intense as the working class was keen to display its force with the employers. The feudal system of workplace relationship was already put to test at that particular time of Mauritian history.



The next paragraph speaks of a new form of socialism that affected the masses in the advancement of employee relations in Mauritius.

### **A major spur in the seventies**

#### **“Les Années de Braise”<sup>5</sup>**

In the early sixties, common people started looking for white-collar jobs and new sectors were developed. Though the island remained primarily agricultural, industrial relations had more impact in various sectors of the economy (Schillinger, 2005). This led to the development of Trade Union Federations such as the Mauritius Labour Congress, the Government Teachers’ Union and the General Clerical Services Union. The unions defended the interests of their members and got involved in major bargaining processes.

The development of the Free Zone sector in the early seventies led to a spur in Industrial Relations. Industrial development in Mauritius has largely contributed to the economic progress of the country. Job development was the main priority when the Export Processing Zone (EPZ) was set up in 1971 (SIDS-Mauritius, 2005). Many new sectors were developed in 1970 such as the textile sector, jewellery sector, the tourism sector and other sectors were given more attention like, the fishing sector and existing agricultural sectors such as tea, tobacco and aloe. The success of EPZ industries has been such that they have absorbed the labour surplus; indeed there was a labour shortage in the island and several enterprises resorted to migrant labour to expand production (maurinet.com).

Trade Unions were formed and fought hard to improve the conditions of work and pay structures in the new textile factories. The early seventies were also a period of political upheaval following the creation of the new party, Mouvement Militant Mauricien (MMM) (Betchoo, 2009). A new ideal with close resemblance to May 68 student movements in

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<sup>5</sup> The term illustrates an important period of union power in Mauritius. Term inspired from May 1968 movement in France where a political leader was heavily influenced by the French Socialist position. This was translated to Mauritius between 1971 and 1980.

France spread over the island in the quest for social justice. Gunn (1998) describes May 1968 as a time when the workers struck, it was more than just about the bread and butter issues. It was about all the social ills that had built up. It was about the management culture that existed and explained why the movement could so rapidly develop into a revolution. The unemployed, especially the youth, rallied behind a new political party, the MMM, formed in 1969. They appealed to poor and working-class Mauritians of all backgrounds with their radical program of socialist change (Library of Congress, 1998). Other parties had also held such political actions in the early part of the century, namely the Labour Party, L'Union Mauricienne and Jan Andolan. Since there were too much strike and violence in 1971, there was a Constitutional amendment leading to the Industrial Relations Act and Public Order Act, whereby both the rights of assembly and the union actions were limited (Napal, 1986).

In parallel with new bargaining politicians, stronger trade unions were created. The General Workers' Federation, an ally of the MMM got a strong foothold at the workplace as it fought for the improvement of the dockers. Other Unions such as the Sugar Industry Labour Union (SILU) and the Union des Artisans de L'Industrie Sucrière (UASI) joined hands together to increase the power and the credibility of the Unions (Betchoo, 2009). The seventies, referred as "les Années Syndicales" were an important era in the existence of Trade Unions and the improvement of industrial relations in Mauritius.

### **Marxism and its impact on unionisation in Mauritius**

Given their internationalist focus, Third World Marxists prioritised solidarity efforts with national liberation revolutions and sought especially to reach workers and the racially oppressed with their anti-imperialist message (Elbaum, 1999). The buoyant seventies of trade unions in Mauritius coupled with the great success at that time explains that Marxist ideology was imported mainly from young and enthusiastic politicians, who would call themselves modern patriots. At a time when the world was divided into two blocs as the Cold War was

impacting fully on international diplomacy, it was evident that Marxist ideologies, considered as marginal in democratic societies, including Mauritius, got their appeal. The struggle to bring about trade union unity, on the basis of the revolutionary outlook, demanded criticism and fight against the established leadership, its practices and ideology (Randive, 1984). A handful of university students studied in the ex-USSR and France, both widely swept by Marxist ideologies and, France which delineated partly from the Western bloc in May 1968. The struggle for the masses and mass organisation, and their unity took various forms. Work in mass trade unions led by the reformists, united fronts and united actions and the formation of separate mass organisations-all have played a role in building trade union unity when they reflected the appropriate form of cooperation and unity aimed at struggle among workers (Randive, 1984). The success of Marxism could be understood from the fact that the social ills that had been built up. The social movement developed into a revolution (International Marxist Tendency, 1998).

By the 1990s, in a post-GATT era illustrated by globalisation and the coming to prominence of the World Trade Organisation (1995) followed by trends like global privatisation, borderless world without barriers (Ghoshal and Bartlett, 1998), the dismantling of trade barriers and the widening of trade opportunities, Marxist ideals evaporated from the developing world and its legacy is however testified as a timeless inspiration both for trade union leaders and politicians. Workers were inspired by the movement as it could not be just classified as a fighting force but as a class in itself (International Marxist Tendency, 1998).

While Mauritius gradually shifted from a subsistence economy relying on monocrop culture to a new-industrialised nation, the consumption society became the new model which incidentally put socialist ideals at bay. There was also the second economic boom of 1985 which immediately brought more wealth and a higher consumer power to the Mauritians

(Schillinger, 2005). In a society where jobs were more easily made available, the power of unions declined.

### **The Revival of Marxism among Craft Unions**

Though Marxist ideals have been denied since long, there has been little evidence in June of a sudden rekindling of such philosophy among the Craft Unions of Mauritius. Such unions were pioneers in espousing Marxist ideals by the 1970s, a long time after they had been subjected to feudal labour-management relations evidenced through high levels of repression (Betchoo, 2003). It was inevitable that the trade union struggles should confine themselves to immediate economic demands, mainly of wages. That was the consciousness of the participants, workers who were just laying the basis of a common organisation (Randive, 1984). Through Marxism, they gained an impetus in the seventies, which also attested their relative power in Collective Bargaining.

In June 2010, following a long battle of claim for organisational justice, punctuated by threat of strike action, the Mauritius Sugar Planters' Association has agreed to offer 20% compensation after several rounds that it had with the different craft unions representing the sugar sector and the Council for Mediation and Conciliation (CMC).

Marimootoo (2010) stated that Marxist ideals had rekindled after a long time of hibernation in the contemporary different economic setting. The labour-union militant movement emerged from a unit platform - composed of Sugar Industry Labourers' Union, Union of Craftsmen of the Sugar Industry, Craftsmen and General Workers' Union and Organisation of the Unit of the Craftsmen - challenged employers of the sugar industry through a 20% payable wage increase with retroactive effect as from last January with all the craftsmen and labourers.

To this end, it would be fair to assess that such revival is spontaneous, not necessarily sustained in the long-run. The reason is that the sugar sector alone accommodates craft

unions while other manufacturing sectors are presumably less unionised. The revival of the said sector still bears some inheritance of colonial days.

### **Power Politics and Union strength**

The evolution of trade unions depends globally on the influence that power politics directly or indirectly have upon them. Swabeck (1938) in the New International comments on the change in the primary objectives of trade unions linked with power struggle to their political identification stated “the trade union movement was conditioned in its development by the economic and political framework within which it existed. Its own internal dynamics did not operate independently of these conditions. Unions could embrace a much larger and a much more decisive section of the working class. By virtue of their strengthened position they had become a much more potent political factor.”

The General Workers’ Federation in Mauritius allied itself with the then left-winged party MMM in 1971 whereby both parties participated in the 1971 strike and collaborated on further strike actions until the end of the decade. Swabeck (1938) further purported that trade unions could not challenge employers by keeping themselves as pure and unscathed by politics. This citation calls for an affiliation of unions to power politics since under these conditions it would be difficult to anticipate a labour party development of the chemically pure type.

The question of trade unions and the part they play in society is once again appearing on the agenda of political concerns. While over the last decade liberal market governments have set the scene for union demobilisation (Smith and Morton, 1993), there has also been an increased concern by social democratic parties about their formal and substantive relationships with trade unions.

Through a historically informed analysis Taylor in 1993 compared these disparate states, exploring the relationships between their trade union movements and politics. His

argument was that unions were inevitably political, whether they or politicians like it and that within capitalist industrial states they were relatively powerless. Unions were primarily reactive and defensive in their political behaviour. A parallel can here be developed with the Mauritian context. Initially, they tend to display their neutrality vis-à-vis political parties stating that they are power struggle based with intense focus on employee relations. This behaviour persists for some time until there will be some lining up with political parties, usually left-winged ones.

Collen and Seegobin (2010) stated that too many unions functioned undemocratically, where anything could be “negotiated”, and where strikes could be “announced” on posters, or called off without assemblies, with many workers still seeing their main hopes lying in tripartite talks around tables in Port Louis or in Geneva, instead of in confrontations at work site level and political struggles of their own for their emancipation around a common consciously understood political programme for taking power as a class. The partnership between politics and trade unionism offers the following conclusions. Firstly, trade unions may try to create an identity of their own but ultimately end up as political parties or have strong affiliation to political ideals that deviate from their own initial visions. The case of Solidarnosc (1981) in Poland affirms the direct influence of politics in trade union activities.

### **Democracy and large number of unions**

Despite the fact that trade unionism is weak in Mauritius, the country suffers from an excessive number of trade unions which are created either by personal compulsion of potential union leaders or simply as a result of the fragmentation of unions into sub-groups and eventually new and competitor unions within the same organisation.

The White Paper (2004) on a new legal framework for industrial Relations in Mauritius explains that trade union membership is an important corollary of collective bargaining. It mentions that the proliferation of trade unions has been substantial in the last

three decades. The number of trade unions, which was 199 in 1977, has reached 320 in 2000 and 347 in 2011.

In 2011, 10 unions (3.6%) had more than 5,000 members, 38% had less than 100 members, and about 59% had less than 300 members. The level of trade union density averaged 12 % in the private sector in 2000. About 50% of the trade unions were representing public service employee and parastatal bodies. In this regard, it is worth noting that over 200 trade unions have less than 300 members implying the degree of fragmentation through excessive union creation (Statistics Mauritius, 2010).

Crockett et al (1992) are critical regarding size as a key factor determining union power. They commented that the negative union effect is strongest when the number of unions measures unionism. Where there are several unions present, the detrimental effect on productivity is greater than if the workplace had a single union. The presence of a number of unions presumably causes demarcation problems, inter-union competition and communication problems and may be associated with possible conflicts between union voices.

Regarding the Mauritian situation, Jean-François Chaumière (2010) in a Speech addressed at a National Conference, stated that there were too many trade unions for a small country like Mauritius. There were 338 trade unions, 19 federations, 4 confederations which represented a single situation in the world. The country's working population comprised 500 000 workers.

The Minister stated that it did not serve to have as many trade unions as possible. Their negotiation power had weakened. There was a need for credible, coherent interlocutors and tough opponents. Another problem that such a situation generated is the double counting. Chaumière (2010) explained that there existed situations where several trade unions were found in several federations and confederations. It was then difficult to count the number of

unionised workers. There was an evidence of a proliferation of the trade unions in Mauritius. Trade union leaders asserted that the numerous trade unions illustrated the concept of industrial democracy while they allowed for a higher level of unionisation among members who were under-represented in the past. According to some leaders, the rationalisation of unions would be a counter-effective measure sine the Employment Relations Act 2008 favours wider unionisation.

### **Factors that have contributed to the decline of unions and challenges facing them**

This section analyses factors that caused the decline of trade unions from a global perspective paying particular attention to three areas namely the United States, the United Kingdom and Africa where challenges facing labour organisations are highlighted. Each environment has certain characteristics that are individual and some that differ. This evaluation aims to find out what were the factors that affected trade unions in the international context before dealing with the local context.

#### **Case One: United States**

Hunter (1999) identified major trends that have contributed to the continued decline in labour union membership, and these trends continue to grow in strength. They are as follows:

##### **Global Competition and Deregulation in Traditionally Unionised Industries**

Hunter (1999) stated that deregulation has brought greater competition in the US industry not only domestically but also from abroad. Economic globalisation has resulted in large-scale layoffs and growing economic insecurity for workers, particularly in these historically unionised industries. This in turn has limited union efforts to raise their members' wages and benefits.

##### **Changes in the American Economy and Workforce Demographics**

There were a rising number of illegal immigrant workers who, fearing deportation, were disinclined to protest substandard employment conditions, much less become involved



in a union organising campaign. The rapidly expanding contingent workforce - composed of mostly women, temporary workers, and part-time employees - had also proven to be difficult for unions to organise (Hunter, 1999). Additionally, shifts in the American job market from the stagnant manufacturing sector to an expanding service sector and the creation of many new largely white collar and technical occupations had also presented organising challenges to unions.

### **Federal Employment Law supplanting Traditional Union Roles**

Hunter (1999) stated that Congress had passed a number of new laws and mandates designed to combat employment discrimination of various types, establish safe and healthy workplaces, provide family and medical leave, give workers notice for plant closings, and much more. Unions had become less necessary for many workers, and the cultural movement toward legislative protections had to a great extent replaced collective action in the workplace.

### **Case Two: United Kingdom**

#### **Industrial Decline**

Concerning the United Kingdom, Schifferes (2004) mentioned that at the root of the long-term decline of Britain's unions was the changing structure of the British economy. UK trade unions have traditionally been strongest in the old manufacturing industries like steel, coal, printing, the docks, and engineering (e.g. car manufacture). According to Hyman (2004) commented that another factor was the tougher competitive environment in which an anti-union stance seemed an attractive option to employers.

The difficult economic climate, and the decline of piecework bargaining (which had encouraged strikes), all contributed to this decline. Hyman (2004) confirmed that being a union member had ceased to be the social norm, and a new generation has grown up who not only are not trade unionists, but whose parents have never been in unions either. This could

contest the pattern of the unions and their workforce in the coming future in the United States.

### **New Outlook**

As the bargaining power weakened, unions sought new means of influence, and the “new realism” took hold, looking for partnership rather than confrontation with employers. (Schifferes, 2004) This also weakened the power of local union activists like shop stewards, and unions adopted a more strategic use of power, where strike were the last resort, not the first course of action (Hyman, 2004). Additionally, their complex bargaining relationship with the government is paralleled by the complicated negotiations over additional union rights in the private sector.

### **Case Three: Africa**

According to the Africa Labour Researchers Network-ALRN (2012), some African countries workers and their unions enjoy basic labour and organisational rights, whereas in others employers and the State expose them to suppression and intimidation. There are, however, some common trends that the labour movement in Africa needs to confront. One striking issue is the question of representation.

### **The Issue of Representation**

Unions will therefore have to broaden their membership base beyond the formal sector to include the many millions of workers in the informal small business sector. The point for African trade unions is that far too many workers in the small business sector are currently not unionised. They present an enormous potential for membership growth and the poor conditions of employment in large parts of the informal sector can only be improved through a combination of protective legislation and unionisation.

The ALRN (2012) states that African unions will also have to pay far more attention to gender issues and become organisations that are relevant for and responsive to the needs of

women workers. The same applies to young workers who often regard trade unions as irrelevant to their interests.

### **The Importance of Strategic Alliances**

Another key issue for African unions and the international labour movement is the question of how to deal with the onslaught of neo-liberal economic policies. Today, many governments adopt similar policies and describe them as their own invention. Namibia, South Africa and the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) are typical examples in this regard. Although the labour movement has repeatedly opposed such policies and even presented its own alternative proposals (as in Zimbabwe and South Africa), governments are usually not willing to listen and rather lend an ear to the business lobby and the IMF/ World Bank advisors (Chiripanhura and Kanyenze, 2001). Unions will therefore have to develop strategic alliances with other progressive organisations to create the necessary groundswell to force governments into a change of policy. Several trade union movements on our continent are already engaging in issues beyond bread and butter. (ALRN, 2012) Although it is critical for unions to render good services to their members and assist them with their workplace-related problems, unions have to engage the policy arena if they want to address the root causes of the problems that African workers are facing today. At times, trade unions at national level backed a specific political party or went into politics themselves with mixed results. African workers will therefore have to ensure that their unions engage in politics with a clear mandate and enough independence to promote a workers agenda.

### **The Influence of Globalisation**

Globalisation has been given considered as a vital reason that has accounted for the decline of unions. Globalisation has also affected how firms see their employees (Binghay, 2005). With the rising costs of production, management has embarked on creating cheap labour market to attain the objective of keeping low prices for their products while

maintaining high profits, leading one to think that labour have become commodity and not a partner for progress.

Another phenomenon that could be associated with globalisation is the emergence of more sophisticated “decollectivisation” strategies on the part of employers (Binghay, 2005). With intense competition, employers just could not afford any obstructions in their production processes, disposing them to adopt anti-union practices.

Apart from globalisation, there is the phenomenon of technological advancements. Advancements in technology have made it possible for the new units of production to be geographically dispersed. Binghay (2005) states that relevant to this, is the fact that today, it is no longer necessary for people to work closely and be physically located in the same place. The computer has become an indispensable tool of the society with millions of people doing their work online.

Economic theory has generally been hostile to unions due to their perceived negative effect on efficiency (Checchi & Lucifora, 2002). From this perspective, the widespread fall in union membership and density since 1970 can be seen as the terminal decline of a market imperfection (Visser, 2006).

### **Trade Union decline in the Mauritian context**

Over the past thirty years, the concept of work and employment relations have undergone far reaching transformations with the advent of new technologies, the widening of the informal sector, influx of labour migration, increased participation of women in the labour market and the adoption of flexible market policies (White Paper on a new legal framework for industrial relations in Mauritius, 2004). The same condition was already affecting developed countries like England. The Mid-term Report (2002) in the UK stated that Industrial relations legislation plays a more direct role in the ebb and flow of membership. In the 1980s legislation impaired union security by weakening and then

outlawing the closed shop and interfering in check-off arrangements. The strike threat, a fundamental source of union power, was weakened by a succession of laws which permitted a union to be sued, introduced ballots prior to a strike, and outlawed both secondary and unofficial action.

In this changing context, the trade unions all over the world have experienced decreasing membership and have to cope with a more diversified workforce, more complex issues and broader societal concerns such as discrimination, harassment, work and family among others. With globalisation and liberalisation, the Mauritian trade union movement is faced with new challenges. Bhowon, Boodhoo and Chellapermal (2004) state that trade unions can no longer confine themselves to such traditional issues as better conditions of work, but must deal with issues such as globalisation, sustainable industrialisation and the linkage between trade and environment, and related WTO issues.

The main argument here is that the power of unions has declined and this does not create that enthusiasm and drive that unionisation created in earlier times of history. Workers are less interested in union issues today. Some reasons accounting for the decline of trade unions in Mauritius are now explained.

### **Better Living Standards of the Average Mauritian**

Living standards in Mauritius have changed over the years. From a mere \$1000 per inhabitant in the 1980s, the country has experienced higher wage and better incomes to attain an average \$12 400 (IMF, 2010) Gross Domestic product per inhabitant. The purchasing power of the consumer has increased by allowing him more opportunities to have disposable income and economic rent. Such consumption which has increased dramatically does not motivate employees to look for security among trade unions.

### **The Industrialisation of the Economy**

Shifting from an agricultural economy to an industrialised economy, workers have moved into a new industrial setting. The economy has moved from a mono-crop economy to an export-led industrial and service-based economy (White Paper, 2004). This situation did not prepare traditional unions to enter the industrial sector since it was difficult for them to change their orientation. Likewise, employees had fewer opportunities to become unionised and preferred working in the new environment which was a more remunerating one than their former occupations. The White Paper (2004) stated that the composition of union membership did not evolve significantly following the changes in the sectoral distribution of employment. Additionally, employers are increasingly hostile towards trade unions and adopting HRM practices that aim to exclude or weaken unions at the workplace. (Petzall et al 2003)

### **The Development of the Services Sector**

Miles and Boden (2000) describe services as the “Cinderella sector” which is largely ignored. They argue, however, that as the share of services in national economies continues to grow, and the linkages between services and other sectors of the economy are extended, the tendency to overlook services becomes less rational. The services sector is now fast-developing in Mauritius. Through the creation of major estate property linked with the provision of services, the need for unionisation has declined. Mukherji (2005) firstly points out that the major labour groups who are posing a challenge to the trade union movement may be grouped into several distinct, but overlapping categories: (i) new entrants at the higher end of labour markets, including professional and white-collar workers; (ii) casual workers, who are either part-time or temporary; (iii) home-based workers and those in the informal sector; and (iv) women workers. Services are usually linked with white-collar jobs though ancillary jobs may be blue collar in nature. Such sophisticated work environment

does not readily call for trade unions which are considered to be more linked with manufacturing sectors of the economy.

Smith & Williams (2006) however state that is not so much the characteristics of the service economy that have proved to be detrimental to the trade unions, but rather the way in which managers have used the more hostile political and economic climate for trade unionism to undermine its power and legitimacy. Mukherji (2005) states that the informal sector has grown exponentially with an increasing share of new jobs either being created in, or outsourced to, the informal sector. Union strategies to bridge the gap between the formal and informal sectors are rapidly becoming central to the future of trade unions in these countries.

### **An Export-based Economy**

Since the Mauritian economy is more export-based, work has to be accomplished within tight deadlines. In a global economy, there is lesser time that one can allocate to union activities. Changes in technology, work patterns and attitudes do not offer enough flexibility to employees to consider unionisation. This perception is rather avoided in the current context.

Although it must be recognised that the trade unions played and still play a fundamental role in the industrial sector, life was not easy for the trade unionists and they had to resort to strikes and other means of solving industrial disputes to be recognised as representatives of trade unions of the Export Processing Zone. Certain industrialists went as far as setting up management committees in their factories to divide their workers and weaken the trade union movement. (Bhowon, Boodhoo and Chellapermal, 2004) The shift to service industry employment, where unions traditionally have been weaker, also has been a serious problem for labor unions. According to the US Department of State, (2010) women,

young people, temporary and part-time workers - all less receptive to union membership - hold a large proportion of the new jobs created in recent years.

### **Paternalistic Managerial Style**

The most important conglomerates of Mauritius offer few opportunities to their employees to unionise. The actual position of the private sector favours a more paternalistic management style than encouraging employee democracy (Betchoo, 2003 in L'Express). Although employee relations have improved over the years, the pattern in private companies remains the same. It is argued that the ideology of a family culture is a significant barrier to a new organising model of unionism. Private companies were mostly family-owned when they were created in Mauritius.

Consequently, this evidence supports the case that family-run firms can be highly exploitative to which State support may be necessary to extend collective representation in smaller firms (Dundon et al, 1999). According to the firm's culture, it is against their philosophy to encourage unionisation although employees may be affiliated to external bodies or confederations. Inside the companies, such a situation is normally not permitted.

Zabeer (2008) further supports the point by stating that employers themselves engaged in paternalistic practices, such as the establishment of health and welfare plans, as a means of making unionism seem less desirable.

### **Employment Legislation and Conditions**

The Employment Relations Act 2008 has opened up opportunities for unionisation. (ERA 2008) It encourages employees to have the freedom of being unionised or not. However, the right to strike action, which is fundamental in guaranteeing employee freedom to express or organise, is not encouraged owing to the structure of the economy. Such fear remains inherent among workers while they feel not important of seeking help through unions, especially from the private sector.



### **Loss of Charismatic Leadership**

Charismatic leadership was earlier illustrated through the personality traits that leaders earlier displayed. From Edgar Milien in the 1930s to political leaders and unionists of the 1970s, charismatic leadership had its influence on organisations and the employees. The drive and enthusiasm of leaders have disappeared through the evolution of the economy (Robbins, 1998). Although, in recent times, a call for Marxism has had its positive effects, trade union leaders are often criticised for their vested interests.

Shaw (2005) explained how charismatic leaders have generally declined in the course of the twentieth century. This phenomenon looks global, especially at the workplace where the influence of union leaders has declined and become more oriented to collaborative leadership. Shaw (2005) stated that the power of charismatic leadership, historically perceived as a positive quality sought by institutions to achieve their objectives, has been weakening in the past decade. The same could apply to the Mauritian case where political leaders prevailed over unions in the past and were replaced by new leaders coming from different backgrounds.

### **Trade Unions' reaction to the problem**

It is important to find out how trade unions adjust or prepare themselves in the contemporary employee relations context. The outcome of the research will find out how the public and private unions adapt themselves to an evolutionary context. The researcher finds it relevant to search out how both local and international unions expect to prepare themselves in the current situation. Certain key variables have been found through both local and international readings. They are developed in this section.

### **The Need for Better Female Representation**

Whether it comes from Mauritius or abroad, gender representation in trade unions is always debated in different forums. The broad picture that the public usually gets is the “macho” orientation of unions which traditionally appears to be male-dominated with charismatic leaders. This explanation usually comes from the fact that men have traditionally been considered as breadwinners and women have been limited to household chores or ordinary positions in the office. Schillinger (2005), on the other hand, states that like everywhere else in the world, women and young workers are still underrepresented in trade union structures and leadership positions. However, for some time now, a generational change is taking place which, so far, has largely remained unnoticed. The argument here would be how women would be better represented in today’s employee relations context and how well they could contribute to their union.

Healy and Kirton (2007) explained that the barriers that women face in accessing union leadership are similar to those they face in major occupations, especially male dominated ones. Whether women from certain types of occupations are better able to surmount the barriers (i.e. Do some jobs prepare women better for life inside unions?) would be a question that could be usefully explored in the research.

Women have emerged as the flexible labour force par excellence in the highly competitive labour intensive sectors of the global economy, leading to their growing presence in paid work in many regions of the world (Morris, 2009). While worldwide women have increased their share of the world’s labour force, are more evenly distributed across the sectors than they were in the past and have made some advance in the limited number of managerial and administrative jobs in developing countries, gender hierarchies in the labour market have proved resilient (Morris, 2009). Making women aware of the benefits of trade union membership, trade union representation in the workplace, and collective agreements, are also important tools in the efforts to close the gap.

### **The Importance of New Communication Strategies**

In the face of declining membership and recruitment and financial problems, some trade unions are now trying to find new ways of making their organisations more attractive to new groups of employees, in particular young workers. This is recognition of the fact that, in the electronic workplace, the old ways in which unions have traditionally communicated with members may no longer be the most appropriate (Lismoen, 2002). Most trade unions, however, seem to regard the internet first and foremost as a channel for swift communication of information, for example in relation to wage settlements, and as a general information channel serving the media (Nergarrd, 1999). The following explain the importance of new communication technologies as potential for innovation regarding trade unions. The argument is to see how this strategy could be applicable to Mauritius.

Communication strategies on their own will not only bring full dynamism to trade unions but will serve as a means of strengthening trade union culture, values and credibility.

Daskalova (2010) outlines some useful strategies that Bulgaria will adopt to ensure better acceptance from employees to be unionised.

The strategy includes:

- direct campaigns in the target branches in the target regions and direct contact with workers;
- providing a range of new services, information and training, social and trade union rights, legal services and representation;
- improving internal organisational mechanisms and tools;
- improving the communication strategy;

### **Leadership Development and Training for Union leaders**

Bandura (1977) explained that leadership development focused on the development of leadership as a process. This includes the interpersonal relationships, social influence process, and the team dynamics between the leader and his team at the organisational level, the contextual factors surrounding the team such as the perception of the organisational climate and the social network linkages between the team and other groups in the organisation.

Compared to Marxist leaders who were totally inspired in the seventies, few union leaders have the capability of boasting themselves as leaders capable of producing effects and setting clear visions to their followers. Besides, it is believed that learning better reaches younger leaders, something difficult to find in Mauritius. Research could therefore relate leadership efficiency to younger generations of trade union leaders. In Singapore, such programmes are aimed at ensuring the new generation of union leaders.

The future of the NTUC (Singapore) depends on it growing the next generation of leaders, and this is why the Leadership Development Department (LDD) will be working with unions to nurture and develop potential leaders this year. Putting it in a nutshell, Leadership Development programme director Chan Soo Sen (2002) said that the continuing success of the labour movement rested on how successful NTUC and its affiliates can nurture and develop new generations of union leaders with strong abilities and good character.

The contrast in Mauritius is that leaders tend to offer programmes and have access to limited training through workshops. Alongside, leadership development is not directed to younger generation of union leaders.

### **The Importance of Social Partnership**

The White paper (2004) comments on the relevance of social partnership as a new opportunity for unions. It claims that consensus on industrial relations legislation is difficult to achieve and total consensus is almost impossible. It has that there has been considerable progress in the thinking of the social partners and over the years, a convergence of views has

emerged on several issues. Both trade unions and employers agree on the need to develop collective bargaining, good faith negotiations, more efficient dispute resolution mechanisms and peaceful and voluntary resolution of disputes by the social partners themselves.

According to Scottish Executive Social Research (2004), the defining social partnership is quite complex, both in terms of the make up of the partnership and in the principles and purposes behind it. Some general themes emerge and they are explained below.

Social partners traditionally include representatives from the government, trade unions and employer's organisations. However, representatives from "civic" society can also be involved. Social partners can be included in discussion and debate on policymaking, however it is more likely that they are involved in practical development of strategy and implementation. Usdaw (1998) mentions that the partnership approach means employees are involved in the drawing up of company policies, but not in the management of the business. Employees, through their trade union, are involved with the decision making process from an early stage. The majority of social partnerships appear to be connected to employment and training issues. Usdaw (1998) also purports that the type of culture which social partnership tries to create is often called a "win win" culture.

Important issues that have arisen from the research about the workings of social partnership (some issues compound both strength and weakness), include: Debate and negotiation with social partnerships can bring about a certain degree of consensus in society with regard to strategies undertaken by government. Final policy decisions are more likely to be welcomed and implemented more effectively.

### **Avenues for research from literature reviewed**

The literature survey developed avenues for the research areas. From the beginning, it placed the Employment Relations Act (2008), as a background for the research while generalising it would not support the strategic issues developed. Part of the key strategies

like union recognition, empowerment, innovation, etc was mentioned in the Act and encouraged the researcher to develop them in the actual context.

Selected literature and analysis from scholarly articles on human resource management and employee relations allowed the researcher to find out more insightful issues for the research namely globalisation, the rationalisation of unions and the need to communicate better.

Six key issues were synthesised. A single theme could not underpin the research because of the complex nature of the problem.

Innovation in communication was important for unions because the ERA 2008 forecasted the capacity of the trade unions be reinforced so as to improve their negotiating skills and enhance their understanding of key labour market issues for a more professional and objective intervention. Poon and Swatman (1999) stated that the most useful function of the Internet is the use of e-mail to conduct business communications. Qualman (2009) also noted that the use of social media such as Twitter and Facebook not only enables social interaction but also the building of business networks.

The empowerment of women and other employees was an issue that affected union strategies. Traditional societies had since long limited women's access to union activities but in recent times, through government work policies in the world and Mauritius, women were called to play a more pro-active role at work and in unions. African women, with the help of the trade union movement and other sectors of civil society, are leading the way to a prosperous Africa based on growth, sustainable development, democracy and human and trade union rights (Cissé & David, 2002). Despite economic, cultural, institutional or even physical hurdles, African women organize and struggle. Cissé and David (2002) state that Africa's prospects will depend on their input and on the place they will be given in shaping

the future. Women are not only to benefit from development; they should be recognized as key actors in the process.

Globalisation was closely monitored as a key issue. Ghoshal (1984) commented on the borderless world with higher similarities and differences. Consequently, trade unions are called to play a more active role in achieving a social dimension of globalisation and regional integration (Misser 2002). This could imply that trade unions had to abide by the concept which consequently was highly commented by unions in Mauritius as a threat to the job sustainability in the fragile export-oriented sector of Mauritius. Misser (2002) stated that in order for trade unions to benefit from regional economic integration, they should increase their role by ensuring that they are involved in the design stages of any regional integration effort and demand of their governments the right to be involved and consulted, together with other stakeholders, on all matters of regional concern; labour and other social issues take centre stage, as there cannot be any economic development devoid of a social dimension. In spite of the ambiguity surrounding the concept, an increasing number of employers, trade unions and governments have embraced social dialogue as a desirable form of interaction among them (Rueda-Catry, 2003). This is because it embodies certain values that are inherent to the ideals of democracy and meets certain aspirations for equity and efficiency, which the parties in industrial relations hold. Social partnership was a new concept proposed by the International Labour Organisation (2002) which encouraged higher interaction and dialogue between employers and employees. ILO invited the governments to ensure that the necessary preconditions exist for social dialogue, including respect for the fundamental principles and the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining, a sound industrial relations environment. Rueda-Catry (2003) advocated that one advantage of social dialogue over such traditional concepts as “collective bargaining” or “tripartite consultations” lies in its open nature. The Workpaper (2004) stated that employers in Mauritius ideally favoured the idea

but it was seen as a means of “buying” union leaders and compromising the bargaining power of trade unions. As a general trend, union leaders had explained their concern regarding too many unions with too many diverging goals that affected their credibility. At present, there is a multiplicity of institutions with similar ambitions and overlapping memberships (Gibb, 2006). There is also rivalry and tension among some of them. Gibb (2006) commented that the existing structure was economically damaging, politically divisive and legally incoherent. It was not working now and it would not work in the future. The new employee relations climate in Mauritius favoured higher convergence of ideas, common goals and union identity. Former Employment Minister Chaumière (2010) deplored the existence of many unions and considered union rationalisation. Fewer unions with more convergent demands and focused goals could be better than the multiplicity of unions.

### **Summary and Transition**

This Literature Review analysed the various approaches to trade union evolution in the Mauritian Context but also focused on international trends and practices. The literature review gave an important consideration to unionism in Mauritius over the years with particular attention to two key moments in history-the late 1930s where the first major employee representation was made and the buoyant 1970s period where politics and unionism have worked hand in hand because the ideologies of socialism and Marxism proposed at relevance times of history make it a clear case for unions and worker movements to become the voice of people. The situation has changed because various factors have reshaped industrial relations in Mauritius with the industrialisation of the economy as from the 1980s and better aspirations for living for the average Mauritian. Over the years, the influence of charismatic leaders has died and the years of union dominance and struggle are revived as the glorious days of unions. The next chapter covers the research methodology, sampling process and ethical considerations that were linked to this research.



### **Chapter Three: Research Methodology**

This study addressed a major issue in Human Resource Management, which is linked with a selection of new agendas that trade unions would need in the evolving environment of employee relations. The research problem is of national interest given that the implementation of the Employment Relations Act 2008, trade unionists have shown reservations to the new Act while, at the same time, they accepted to rethink their positioning in the new context to ensure their survival.

It would be useful to see how trade unions can adjust themselves in the employment framework defined by the Act. With ongoing debate as to the review or repealing of the Act, which is not a possible option, it can be said that there is room for research in this area of employee relations.

During the Literature Review in Chapter 2, the researcher gave an indication of what employees are expecting through their trade unions and how union leaders, in turn, are making proposals regarding the future orientation of their associations. The key strategies that have been presented will be assessed both quantitatively and qualitatively to see how they apply in context to trade unions in Mauritius both from public and private sectors.

The researcher will henceforth evaluate why unions need to change and essentially how effectively trade unions need to prepare in a new organisational work pattern in Mauritius under the proclamation of the Employment Relations Act 2008. Trade unions did have a major impact on organisations but their traditional way of bargaining has weakened in today's context where employers can themselves fix most of the problems that regard the workforce.

In essence, the structure of trade unions has not changed except in conditions where there has been some occasional revival during important periods like the review of salaries under the Pay Research Bureau Scheme, the Financial Crisis 2008 where the decline of

purchasing power affected consumers and the early years of the millennium when an impending food crisis affected the population. There was also the loss of jobs, which weakened the job stability in the labour-intensive sector of production.

The researcher seeks to find out how some useful variables like labour feminisation, rationalisation of trade unions and the new forms of bargaining structure define the new role of trade unions that were bound to become inactive in the workplace. Accordingly, certain new organisations tend to restrict trade union intervention or may not recognise them while such organisations remain vital to ensure goods workplace dynamics.

### **Research Methodology Technique**

#### **Quantitative Research**

Quantitative research consists of those studies in which the data concerned can be analysed in terms of numbers. Research can be qualitative, that is, it can describe events, persons and so forth scientifically without the use of numerical data (Hughes, 1997).

Quantitative research is based more directly on its original plans and its results are more readily analysed and interpreted. Quantitative research is, as the term suggests, concerned with the collection and analysis of data in numeric form. Hughes (1997) states that such research tends to emphasise relatively large-scale and representative sets of data, and is often, falsely in our view, presented or perceived as being about the gathering of “facts”.

#### **Qualitative Research**

Qualitative research is more open and responsive to its subject. Both types of research are valid and useful. They are not mutually exclusive. It is possible for a single investigation to use both methods (Best and Khan, 1989). Qualitative research is concerned with collecting and analysing information in as many forms, chiefly non-numeric, as possible. It tends to focus on exploring, in as much detail as possible, smaller numbers of instances or examples

which are seen as being interesting or illuminating, and aims to achieve “depth” rather than “breadth” (Blaxter et al, 1996).

Qualitative research can be defined as the study of the complexities of human behaviour (Polkinghorne, 2005). A qualitative research method will help the researcher to gain a clear and deep understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Trochim & Donnelly, 2007). When qualitative research is used, the individuals who participate in the study have the opportunity to describe in their own words what they see as meaningful or significant to them and they are not limited to prearranged or predetermined categories. Van Maanen as cited in Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Lowe (2004) defines qualitative techniques as an array of interpretative techniques which seek to describe, decode, translate and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency, of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world.

### **Merits of quantitative and qualitative methodology for research**

There has been widespread debate in recent years within many of the social sciences regarding the relative merits of quantitative and qualitative strategies for research. The positions taken by individual researchers vary considerably, from those who see the two strategies as entirely separate and based on alternative views of the world, to those who are happy to mix these strategies within their research projects. Bryman (1988) argued for a “best of both worlds” approach and suggested that qualitative and quantitative approaches should be combined. Hughes (1997), nonetheless, warns that such technical solutions underestimate the politics of legitimacy that are associated with choice of methods. In particular, quantitative approaches have been seen as more scientific and “objective”.

### **The importance of the Mixed Methods study**

Borkan (2004) states the importance and relevance of the mixed methods and multi-method research possess where these approaches suggest, discover, and test hypotheses; they

give new insights on complex phenomenon; they allow the investigator to address practice and policy issues from the point of view of both numbers and narratives; they add rigour.

Mixed methods research, according to Borkan (2004) refers to those studies or lines of inquiry that integrate one or more qualitative and quantitative techniques for data collection and/or analysis. Qualitative data collection methods, such as interviews, focus groups, or participant observation, are now almost routinely used as exploratory (hypothesis formation) phases of subsequent, more quantitative surveys in health care (Larssen et al, 1994). They have great potential for exploring new topics or familiarising research teams with a new area. They may also assist in theory building, especially when methods aggregating qualitative studies are utilised (Eastbrooks et al, 1994).

Creswell et al (2004) have constructed an insightful conceptual framework for making sense of the mixed methods field, particularly around issues of quality. Mixed methods not only expand the research toolbox, they also provide the opportunity for synthesis of research traditions and give the investigator additional perspectives and insights that are beyond the scope of any single technique (Cresswell et al., 2004). The result is more than simple addition: the results often transcend the individual methods and disciplines. Creswell et al (2004) note that this form of research is more than simply collecting both quantitative and qualitative data; it indicates that data will be integrated, related, or mixed at some stage of the research process. These types of investigations have the advantages of the deep descriptions and entrée to subjects lived realities explored by qualitative methods and they also have the potential to contribute the generalisation and statistical reliability that is the strength of quantitative research. In addition, Cresswell et al (2004) state that mixed methods lend themselves to valuable opportunities for data triangulation and transformation and instrument design.

The major contribution of Creswell et al (2004) to the scientific literature is that they offer a coding template of important criteria for designing and evaluating mixed methods studies. This template builds on previous literature and includes five criteria: rationale for mixing, types of data collected and analysed, the priority given to qualitative or quantitative research, the implementation sequence, and the phase of the study in which the integration occurred.

That challenge is taken up by Schillaci et al (2004) who present an example of the both the synchronous and sequential use of multiple qualitative and quantitative methodologies in a study that explores the reasons for the dramatic fall in immunisation rates among New Mexico's children. This research demonstrates several of the strengths of mixed methods investigations, starting with the issue of flexibility when unexpected insights arise (Borkan, 2004).

This type of reexamination of already collected qualitative data is akin to secondary analysis of quantitative material. Such exercises, however, can also serve as a starting point for redirection of the researchers' gaze, an iterative process that picks up from the unexpected insight and refocuses the lens of the inquiry towards it (Borkan, 2004). This powerful shift provides a dynamism to mixed methods research often lacking in less comprehensive designs.

The Schillaci et al study (2004) can be analysed using the five criteria suggested by Creswell et al (2004). The rationale for the mixing appears to be that although their quantitative population-based survey and temporal plots detected the statistical trend of decreased immunisations, the researchers needed qualitative, in-depth interviews and field observations to discern potential explanations for the drop - the why. This technique of combined methods particularly suited the existing research work as the need for interpretation was important to the problem issue.

### **Mixed Methods relating to the Current Study**

Regarding the present study, the forms of data collection and analysis were a population-based survey, in-depth interviews and field observations, and tracing of preventable adverse events like private company respondents who were not unionised but could also answer the questions. Precautions were taken to see that all respondents belonged to at least a union and they were employed. Analytical techniques were quite broad and included both statistical and qualitative interpretive processes. According to Borkan (2004), the priority given to them in this research appears to be equal, though separate, and the implementation sequence is first synchronous (multi-method assessment), then sequential (further qualitative inquiry after the survey phase).

The present analysis uses qualitative data to interpret the quantitative findings, and integration between qualitative and quantitative phases occurred at both the beginning and the end of the study - when the unexpected insight arose and when interpretations were applied to the temporal plots (Cresswell et al, 2004). Triangulation is present throughout this study, both between the qualitative and quantitative portions and through observations, and interviews, and likely fits most closely into the triangulation design model. Interviews in the form of Panel of Expert Opinion allowed the researcher to seek proof, counterchecking of results and supporting the findings in the Conclusion and recommendations section.

### **Questionnaires and fieldworkers**

The researcher developed the survey questions with a small and dedicated team of fieldworkers to ensure prompt monitoring and collection of data from various recipients. Qualitative researchers know that the success of our work depends on participants. As it is phrased it in a manuscript, Qualitative researchers only gain control of their projects by first allowing themselves to lose it (Kleinman et al, 1992). Questionnaires were printed and sent to fieldworkers that were recruited for the process. The questionnaires were printed in four

parts; each part addressing two issues. They were assessed with the same respondents over three weeks with an average of one questionnaire sheet per week. Fieldworkers also comprised employee or union representatives in certain sectors like clerical and operational. Their contacts with respondents facilitated the computation of data.

### **Tests and Evaluation**

The research area under review is quite new to Mauritius. Z-tests were used as a means of finding out differences between two samples. The Z-test is a statistical test used to determine whether two population means are different when the variances are known and the sample size is large. The test statistic is assumed to have a normal distribution and nuisance parameters such as standard deviation should be known in order for an accurate Z-test to be performed (Investopedia.com). For example, differences in bargaining power between two unions. GraphPad Software was used to input and analyse the data. The one-sample Z-test was useful because the sample size is fairly large, usually above 30. The Z value showed the distance from the mean in relation to the standard deviation of the mean.

### **Data Analysis**

Statistical techniques along with computer-generated solutions (where applicable) formed the basis of gaining data and making inferences. Descriptive statistics helped to summarise the sample data. Numerical descriptors included mean and standard deviation for continuous data types (like preferences), while frequency and percentage will be more useful in terms of describing categorical (like gender).

Qualitative Analysis referred to questions that called for personal input of data from the respondents. The questions were open-ended and covered each component of the research. The objective behind this exercise was to encourage respondents to give personal opinions regarding the problems affecting unions. There was also the possibility for respondents to give direct answers to questions like to which union or federation they

belonged to. No particular software was required for the exercise. Most of the answers were grouped and synthesised in this data analysis technique.

### **Working population Statistics**

It would be firstly essential to consider the working population sample prior to describing the research sample. This provides the bigger picture like the population ( $\mu$ ) which can be downsized to a reasonable sample size. According to the Quarterly Survey of Statistical Mauritius (First Quarter, 2010), Employment of Mauritians was estimated at 524,400 at the first quarter of 2010 compared to 536,400. The unemployment rate for the first quarter of 2010 is estimated at 8.4% compared to 6.3% at the fourth quarter of 2009 (Statistics Mauritius, 2010). The employment in Mauritians increased by 5,400 from 524,800 in 2009 to 530,200 in 2010. The unemployment rate is expected to increase from 7.3% in 2009 to 7.5% in 2010. Thus, 42% of the Mauritian population is at work, the rest being shared among the unemployed (8.5%) and dependents as well as retired people who constitute the remaining 50% of the population.

The Registrar of Associations (2010) offered the following figures regarding trade unions and their membership in its annual return document 2009. Of the 103,140 employees being unionised, 59,468 were men and 25,899 were female employees. These numbers would make up to some 85,000 unionised employees since larger trade unions have given an overall figure without specifying men and women. From the figures available, the ratio of unionised men to women is 2.3:1 while population figures were 1:1 and employment figures were 1.85:1. Working women were 182,500 in number and accounted for 35% of the total Mauritian workforce.

The ratio of unionised workers to the working population was: 103,140 to 524,400- the ratio being: 1:5 or roughly 20% of the workforce (Ministry of Labour, 2010). There were 362 trade unions in 2009. A comparatively large number of unions comes from the private



sector while public officers fall in two categories: government and parastatal unions. In terms of membership, 17% of the employees in the private sector are unionised while this is over 50% for the government. Globally, these tally in percentage terms to 20% of the working population. Government and parastatal bodies are broadly composed of white-collar unions, private sector bodies are comprised of both white and blue-collar unions. There has been a rise among white-collar occupations like banking and the financial services sector to increase their membership.

### **Research Sample**

The population of Mauritius in 2009 was 1,275,000 and the density of population per square kilometre was 626, rating it as one of the highest in the world (Statistical Mauritius<sup>6</sup>, 2009). The male population was 629,100 and the female population was 645,900 meaning that the ratio is nearly 1:1 with 49% of men and 51% of women.

The most sizeable age group is between 15 and 59 years of age comprising 67.1% in 2009. Generally, Mauritius is a relatively young nation since the percentile range of its population is essentially focused in the 32 year-old group. The median age as at 2010 was therefore close to employees in their early thirties. The survey focused on working people who were people in employment both from public and private sectors with a median age of 32, which can range up to 60. The age spans 23-55 because most people are active at work in this age group and the higher percentage comes from younger employees. To align the research sample with the working population sample, the researcher selected randomly more than 50% of respondents within the age group Of 32 while this also spread both to lower and higher age groups, say 23 to 55.

A sizeable part of the population is centred in the Plaines Wilhems considered as the existing urban areas of Mauritius. Nearly 40% of the population comes from the urban areas

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<sup>6</sup> Official government authority concerned with Statistical compilation and surveys in Mauritius

while the rest of the population is rural. There is a new policy of increasing the number of urban residents through a reform of regional administration. Since the research focused on employees who were employed mainly in white-collar jobs, this factor was not essentially considered in the sample.

### **Sample Selection**

For the purposes of this study, 100 unionised employees both from government and the private sector would be selected. The sample comprised employees between 30 and 60 years working in various government departments including private sector employees working in sectors like shipping, manufacturing and white-collar private sector occupations. However, a sample size of 100 would be acceptable since the Taylor/Nelson Sofres Surveys done on behalf of the professional media in Mauritius consider 700 to be an ideal frame size that can ideally illustrate population characteristics. In the particular case of a dissertation with limited resources and financial outlay, 100 would therefore be a reasonable size.

### **Stratified Sampling**

Stratified random sampling technique was used. Using a stratified sample will always achieve greater precision than a simple random sample, provided that the strata have been chosen so that members of the same stratum are as similar as possible in terms of the characteristic of interest. The greater the differences between the strata, the greater were the gain in precision (Babbie, 2001). Once the sample characteristics have been well defined, the sample would be chosen at random to avoid researcher bias. Castillo (2009) mentioned that researchers also use stratified random sampling when they want to observe relationships between two or more subgroups. With this type of sampling, the researcher is guaranteed subjects from each subgroup are included in the final sample. Random choices would allow various respondents to give their views in a more liberal way than a selective or restrictive sample.

Table 3

*Sample Size*

<i>Sample</i>	<i>100</i>
Men	70 (66-70)
Women	30 revised to 28
Age Group	18-55
Age stratification	Random
Region-Urban/Rural	No differentiation
Union characteristics	White Collar
	Blue Collar
	Non-unionised
Union Type/ Industry	Public Services
	Banking and Financial
	Manufacturing
	Transport
	Construction
Public union respondents	70%
Private union respondents	30%
Expert member checking	One with 5 key members
	-3 union leaders
	-2 academic or University lecturers

**Justification of Sample Size**

As seen in Table 3, the ratio of male to female respondents is 2.3 to 1 meaning that out of 100 respondents, reasonably for every 30 women, there should be 69 men. Figures

have been rounded for ease of calculation. Since more than 60% of the population lies between the 18 and 55, this sample size is chosen. The median age would be 30 years, but the age differences would not materially affect the outcome since all the respondents would be working people.

There would be no need to differentiate between urban and rural unionised employees. Given the small size of the country and the location of union quarters mainly in urban regions, such differentiation would not be required.

Unions have been grouped into three main categories: white collar, blue collar and non-unionised. This could be related to questions about differences between unionised and non-unionised employees. Note that a large percentage (85%) of private sector employees is non-unionised (Statistics Mauritius, 2010). Unions have to be selected from the main industry sectors that influence the economy. In Mauritius, the services sector has become the largest industry and the selection of both government and private services have to be considered. However, employees representing unions like agriculture, construction, manufacturing, etc, among others will be included.

Respondents were 70% and 30% respectively in both types of unions, public and private. This was justified from the 50% and 15% unionisation rate respectively in government and private unions, the ratio being roughly 3:1.

A focus group gave further insight into the research and this brought some balance regarding the opinions that different respondents have provided. The output of the focus group was included in the recommendations wherever applicable.

### **Instrumentation and Materials**

#### **Questionnaire Surveys**

The first phase of the survey comprised the researcher and fieldworkers who acted as research assistants. Quantitative research was initially conducted while questions that elicited

qualitative data were asked in a second phase that just followed the first data collection exercise. Survey methodology as a scientific field seeks to identify principles about the sample design, data collection instruments, statistical adjustment of data, and data processing, and final data analysis that can create systematic and random survey errors (Groves, 2009). The survey was essentially based on questionnaires since these will be appropriate in gaining information and was practical for the purposes of data collection from source. Telephone interviews were not conducted given that it would be quite difficult to locate respondents and gain information from them.

The survey spanned approximately three months while data was concurrently assessed for the different questionnaires that had been prepared for the various evaluations mentioned in this chapter. Although questions were essentially addressed in English language, the interviews were conducted in French and Creole, the local language. Care was taken to ask questions without much semantic difference that could result in the translation of questions.

### **Interviews**

Interviews were conducted with focus groups comprising knowledgeable persons from industry and academia. These formed part of the panel of expert opinion regarding their long-term experience and public profile at the industry level. Interviewing was a technique of collecting data as well as gaining expert knowledge from individuals. Kvale (1996) regarded interviews as an interchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest, sees the centrality of human interaction for knowledge production, and emphasises the social milieu of research data. Interviews are ways for participants to get involved and talk about their views. In addition, the interviewees are able to discuss their perception and interpretation in regards to a given situation. It is their expression from their point of view. Cohen et al (2000) explain that the interview is not simply concerned with collecting data about life: it is part of life itself; its human “embeddedness” is inescapable.

### **Semi-Structured Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews were expected to be done rather than telephone interviews to ensure both the authenticity and the reliability of the data. Compared to surveys, five in-depth interviews were conducted with people who were both trade union leaders and University lecturers. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in a systematic way to ensure that they were undertaken in a logical way whereby each interview assesses a particular set of variables. Semi-structured interviews are non-standardised and are frequently used in qualitative analysis. The interviewer does not do the research to test a specific hypothesis (David, & Sutton, 2004). The researcher has a list of key themes, issues, and questions to be covered. In this type of interview the order of the questions can be changed depending on the direction of the interview.

However, some interviews could be combined to reduce time for data collection. For instance, an interview that focused on female empowerment in trade unions could also be done in parallel with another one which focuses on comparisons between private and public trade unions.

The questionnaires were supported by keys to ensure quick gathering of data with enough accuracy namely in questions that were supported by scales and classification of options in order of preference. It was also expected that respondents having a certain degree of intellectual competence would be capable of answering questions. Some might have been used to such issues as they are already used to such types of interviews.

### **Research Questions**

#### **Quantitative questions**

Question 1: What is the extent to which contemporary strategic HRM (human resource management) strategies are understood and practised by Mauritius trade unions?

Question 2: Which key HRM strategies help improve union performance in Mauritius?

Question 3: What is the relationship between strategic HRM strategies and union performance in Mauritius?

Follow-up qualitative questions

1. What are the common characteristics of trade unions in Mauritius?
2. How do these characteristics affect trade unions in today's employee relations' context?
3. What are the approaches that trade union leaders need to have in the future?
4. Which types of strategies are best suited for trade unions in the current employee relations context?

The answers to the questions were linked to six key strategies or variables that were identified both in the literature review and from local press articles.

### **Strategy 1: Innovation**

Innovation was considered as a variable that influences the reliability of trade unions. Often, unions have been blamed for their inability to innovate (Bradley et al, 2013). Otherwise, some negative comments of existing trade unions in Mauritius could be linked with their parochial attitude to dealing with their employees. Many organisations have now realised that human errors are costly and that their lack of innovation contributes may lead to machine collapse and organization non- performance (Dauda, 2002). Innovation include: the usage of IT-based tools to communicate with employees, the development of websites, the use of e-mails and various related tools, the ability to master change management or succession, the ability to decentralise decision-making, and the ability to empower employees. Dauda (2002) purports that Industrial relations could also be used to stimulate technological innovation when combined with organisational planning and analysis of new technologies and with technological changes. In the research, there was a sorting of the unions into two groups, public unions-A and private unions-B. Unions that innovate would be the experimental group and unions that do not innovate were the control group. If innovation improved the

performance of the union among its members, then innovation would be a strategy applicable to unions.

### **Strategy 2: Bargaining power of union leaders**

The consequences of collective bargaining depend on many factors, including the share of the labour market covered by collective agreements as opposed to individual contracts and the degree of bargaining coordination (Aidt & Tzannatos, 2008). Public trade unions in Mauritius perceived freedom and flexibility when they voiced their grievances with management of public organisations. They chose a formal way of bargaining where they could use certain methods to resort to bolder bargaining actions. Private unions were more vindictive in their approach since they show more resistance to employers while employees might be themselves more threatened and vulnerable to bargaining than their colleagues in the government who were better represented by established labour organisations. It needed to be evaluated how effectively the bargaining tactics were used independently by trade union leaders and what is the outcome of bargaining from each type of union. There might also be the outcome that a difference in bargaining power or tactics of leaders favours one or the other type of union.

### **Strategy 3: Social Partnership**

The issue of social partnership is getting better ingrained in the Mauritian society paying regards to the demand of the government to private sector companies to contribute to Corporate Social responsibility. Trade unions have to recognise wider social interests beyond the workplace in order to encourage support (Bieler, 2010). At national level, the benefits of the union role in the partnership process may not always have been visible to potential members (Spotlight, 2011). At the workplace, although the level of unionisation was comparatively low in private companies, social partnership could be useful in improving employee relations although this could forfeit the role of trade unions. Trade unions, on the



other hand, might assume that such partnership can dilute their role although employees are keen to admit that more welfare policies in their favour are better than traditional bargaining practices.

#### **Strategy 4: Globalisation**

The researcher evaluated how globalisation as a current business concept impacted on the structure of trade unions. There was the need to see how globalisation has affected or improved the functioning of unions. Globalisation has put national labour movements under severe pressure due to the increasing transnationalisation of production and informalisation of the economy (Bieler, 2010). For instance, global forces might compel management to respond in a different way to external forces whereby employees are expected to better consider the impending threats of globalisation on their future. At the same time, unions were expected to be loyal in terms of their bargaining vis-à-vis employers.

Some employers perceived that unions were obsolete in the current context when the threat was not from the domestic environment but rather from an uncertain and complex external environment. There might be an alternative to make internal unions more lenient towards management and grouped as employee representation associations, especially in the private sector that covered manufacturing and the service-based industries.

#### **Strategy 5: Female Empowerment**

The representation of women in trade unions is quite weak in Mauritius, especially in the private sector. The percentage of women in key positions in their respective unions is limited. Women's participation in the labour market is essential for their economic Empowerment (United Nations, 2010). Few women are leaders of their respective union and act as the voice of their association. The researcher wanted to find out how the contribution of women and their presence on union boards could create more dynamism in the unions. A UN Report (2010) states that strong measures are needed to eliminate stereotypical attitudes

regarding the role of women and men in society, which limit women's participation in the labour market. Women might have their personal agendas like gender equality; respect of women's rights, Women might also be segregated in some organisations with role stereotypes whereby they might not be actively engaged. Women could positively contribute to their organisations and also bring more balance in decision-making. The feminisation of trade unions should not be perceived as a weakening of the "macho-oriented" unions. This should be perceived as an opportunity to modernise, democratise and improve the dynamics of union bargaining power. The theory supported the fact that equality in gender representation at work followed the same in union profile and that there were chances for unions to become more focused in their demands.

#### **Strategy 6: Fewer and more efficient trade unions**

The streamlining of trade unions has been a matter of thought in recent times. The changing conditions of the 1980s and 1990s undermined the position of organized labour, which now represented a shrinking share of the work force (US Department of State, 2012). Government, trade union leaders and stakeholders stated that with a high number of trade unions, there was evidently a lower contribution of such organisations in terms of expectations, outcomes and benefits that members normally expect from them. The US Department of States (2012) states that the shift to service industry employment, where unions traditionally have been weaker, also has been a serious problem for labour unions.

Streamlining would here mean the reduction in the number of trade unions, higher levels of interaction through the merging of unions in the same industry as well as better synergy developed. The researcher wanted to find out how well fewer trade unions could have better impact on the outcomes that they are expected to provide. This piece of research would test the relevance of numerous and divided unions in industry. Respondents from different organisations provided their opinion in this exercise.

### **Hypotheses formulated with the key strategies**

**Is there a statistical relationship between innovation in communication and the improvement of the influence of trade unions in the new employee relations context?**

Null Hypothesis: Innovation has no effect on improving the influence of trade unions. Whether unions develop modern communications strategy or not has no effect on improving their performance.

Alternative Hypothesis: Innovation has an effect on improving the influence of trade unions. If unions invest in communications and adopt better tools to communicate, they will perform better.

**Is there a statistical relationship between union leadership and the improvement of the bargaining process of unions?**

Null Hypothesis: Neither type of union shows differences in bargaining power. This can be interpreted as bargaining power, regardless of union type or leader, is perceived as the same in terms of outcome. The outcome is that there is no influence of leadership in bargaining and powerful leadership is not needed nowadays.

Alternatively, under controlled tests, it can be seen that one type of union has better outcome, possibly, as a result of the way in which it bargains or due to its leader's capabilities or potential. It may also be that one union engages in a more passive form of bargaining than the other one with a plausible outcome.

**Is there a statistical relationship between social partnership lead and better harmonisation in employee relations in Mauritius?**

Null Hypothesis: Social partnership has no effect on improving employee relations. Either employee relations will remain tense or stable as they are and these are rather influenced by external factors, the environment, etc.

Alternatively, social partnership can be seen as a new form of engagement between trade unions and employers whereby due to active engagement and a more proactive role of the two partners, management and employees, that employee relations are harmonious, less unstable and more predictive. Possibly, a correlation like the more there is social partnership, the better one expects of stable employee relations.

**Is there a statistical relationship between globalisation forces and the functioning of trade unions in the current Employee Relations Context?**

Null Hypothesis: Globalisation as a concept has no incidence on the structure of trade unions in Mauritius. Trade unions will therefore operate in the same way without modification of their structure. It may be stated that by virtue of tradition and long-term existence, trade unions are protected from globalisation forces.

Alternatively, respondents can state that globalisation which comes economic, political and social forces from the outside can compel trade unions to modify and adapt themselves to the new paradigm. It might be a question of survival by redefining trade union strategies and, particularly, structure like decentralised structures, etc. to better respond to the needs of their members.

**Is there a statistical relationship between female empowerment and the bargaining power of trade unions in the new employee relations context?**

Null Hypothesis: Female empowerment will have no effect on the bargaining power of unions. Therefore, the difference in gender hardly matters on the bargaining power of unions implying that female members do not materially add to the improvement of collective bargaining in unions.

Alternatively, when there is better female engagement, either through empowerment or co-option, trade unions benefit from a more balanced approach to bargaining probably

through innovative ideas, more subtle form of bargaining or the development of more engaged and constructive form of bargaining in a more and more evolving context.

**Is there a statistical relationship between fewer and more efficient trade unions and a more concrete contribution of trade unions in Mauritius?**

Null Hypothesis: Whether trade unions are made efficient or not, there will be no effect on the efficiency of trade unions. The argument could be that it is difficult to define rationalisation by simply reducing the number of unions. In this case, it may be argued that federations or larger unions are already representing the workforce and whether unions are reduced in number or merged, no significant change will take place regarding their efficiency or effectiveness.

Alternatively, respondents may claim that by streamlining unions like merging same in their related area of activity, there might be a more conclusive effort. Union leaders and members can come to more convergent views under the same broad agenda which may, in turn, bring better solutions to union problems.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

Data was collected from source by fieldworkers and the researcher who were the only people involved in gaining data. The activity was organised whereby the respondents were invited to participate in the survey both by invitation and telephone calls prior to sending fieldworkers gain the data. Telephone interviews were practised but to a limited extent (up to five respondents) since these tended to be more focused on random sampling.

For quantitative data, the researcher used GraphPad software to firstly compare responses from public and private respondents and secondly validate the findings through Z-tests to see whether there were significant differences between the responses and whether the margin of error could be accepted or not. In rare cases, slight errors occurred but these were explained by certain divergences in opinion between public and private respondents. Where

the opinions were in close range, the Z-test accepted the margin of error (less than 0.05%) and these confirmed the correctness of the information evaluated.

Qualitative data was assessed in the form of responses provided by participants. From the set of responses provided by respondents, the key answers were highlighted. These were synthesised by grouping answers and upholding the most salient ones provided that there would be a certain level of commonality in the results. The summary narrative method in the form of condensed write-up of key findings & results, along with judicious “sprinkling-in” of key illustrative quotes and similar “raw qualitative data” was used (Patton, 1987). No software was used at that time to assess qualitative data.

Data collection was done on a manual basis where the different data were tabulated prior to being analysed. This was a painstaking effort but there was no other option available to the researcher at the time when he conducted the survey. Tests were carried out accordingly within the data ranges e.g. 66 for public respondents and 30 for private ones while recorded information was generally summarised in rounded figures when percentages were noted. One significant figure was rounded to the nearest whole number. This information was eventually input as the findings of the research. With some 100 respondents, Z-tests were proposed to check the reliability of the data especially when comparisons were made between public and private respondents. GraphPad Software with calculators for Z-tests, standard deviations and p values-to tests the consistency of data-were considered as the most adapted quantitative data analysis for the research.

The research also used a panel of expert opinion after the results were interpreted (Chapter Five). Five people were chosen as experts both from a work and academic perspective to validate the correctness of the results. According to Festeris (2005), an “expert” could be characterised as “someone of whom the arguer believes the addressee to put a certain intellectual trust in.” Further, “argumentation from expert opinion” could be

characterised as “argumentation that renders an opinion (more) acceptable by claiming that the opinion is asserted by an expert.” This is where the research could also give insight into potential opportunities for further research.

The sample size comprised hundred respondents. Owing to the structure of trade unions and the representation of sexes, 66 men were selected and 30 women were also included. The age group was between 23 and 55 since most of working people were within this age bracket with a median age of 32.5 years.

No differentiation was made regarding urban and rural areas since a majority of people worked in towns and unions head quarters were in urban areas although a sizeable proportion of employees come from rural areas.

Likewise public union respondents were 70% compared to 30% representation from private unions. The majority of respondents came from white-collar unions since employees in this sector are most highly unionised. Blue-collar unions from the private sector were considered namely those in the manufacturing and construction sector.

Respondents from non-unionised organisations were also considered. The reason is that since a majority of private sector employees are non-unionised, it is important to get feedback from such employees regarding their perception on trade unions.

### **Confidentiality**

This dissertation, being academic by nature, did not position itself as a policy applicable to Mauritius. It was essentially research work needed to fulfil the SMC requirements for a Doctorate degree. The researcher took all the necessary measures to ensure that the research was undertaken in full confidentiality. The researcher himself and his team of fieldworkers forwarded and used all questionnaires with a covering letter stating the confidential nature of the work.

Results and interpretations with regard to the survey would remain the property of the SMC University on approval of the work done. The researcher guaranteed that the outcomes of the survey would not be transmitted to a third party nor would be used as ground material for further research. This information was broadly well received by the participants.

### **Protection of Participants**

To ensure that the dissertation remains an authoritative piece of work, the researcher has ensured that the participants in the survey should be protected. There was no mention of any name in the research while only data regarding gender and industries were the key information collected for the sampling and data review exercise. A list of codes of practice was identified and such information has been made available to all the different participants. This was given to them prior to the research process.

### **Codes of Practice**

The identity of all participants in the research would be kept confidential. No third party would be given any information regarding the profile of participants in the survey. Participants were informed that their feedback and responses would be used exclusively for the research and that there would be no further or related research activity that will take place apart from the one that was actually being undertaken.

Participants were made known that the research addressed the requirements of an academic work which was supervised. Findings of the survey would remain confined to the academic institution where the student was registered and that there was no commercial use of such information.

Participants were informed that the objectives of the research, in no circumstance, aimed at making discrimination or biased arguments of them. The feedback of participants would be used for research experimentation and no assessment of the participants' background. Participants were informed that personal data regarding age, gender or any



required criterion would be solely used for the research purpose and in no way aims at making comparisons and generalisations of the participants.

Participants were informed that the outcomes of the research would not be divulged to them or to any external body. Such an intention should ensure that there was no misuse of information in whatsoever way.

### **Summary**

This chapter analysed the importance of the mixed method for the present study. Taking into consideration the choice between asking standard questions and open-ended questions was important, the researcher found out that the different questions could be answered using both qualitative and quantitative questions. Quantitative questions could be related to hypotheses that supported the six strategies selected for the research while qualitative data would illustrate the results obtained from hypotheses in a more open-ended manner.

Interviews with the panel of Expert Opinion would either confirm or contest the results obtained. Data analysis will be done in the next chapter with findings obtained from questions asked to the 98-100 respondents that answered the various questions. These questions are arranged in a systematic way to answer firstly the three research questions and give insight into how such information would impact on the findings in the concluding chapter.

## **Chapter Four: Data Analysis**

### **Overview**

This study aimed at finding out how trade unions in Mauritius could be successful in the future in relation to today's scenario in the workplace. It explained that trade unions were pursuing current strategies like increasing their membership base and following agendas that are conventional to them like bargaining over wages and improving work conditions in cases where there were a lack of respect for them from employers. The research put forward the idea that trade unions had to follow selected strategies like innovation in communication, leadership, rationalisation, globalisation, female empowerment and social partnership to survive. Some trends were already impacting the external environment like globalisation and social partnership while others like communication or empowerment had to be undertaken from the local perspective.

This research was conducted over three months in 2010. Ninety-six questionnaires were collected of which eight questionnaires were inadequately filled giving a response rate of 95%. Although, the sampling goal was that there would be a predominance of public sector employees over private employees, there was a review of the sampling since respondents from the parastatal sector also formed part of the survey. Fieldworkers made an effort to attract private sector respondents from areas like transport and shipping. This offered the researcher an opportunity to gather more respondents from the private sector while the ratio was readjusted to 66:29 or 2.3 to 1 or slightly higher as the research progressed. In the later areas of research, considering the quality of the data provided the researcher included two additional public respondents. This change did not materially affect the nature of the findings as seen from the reasonable size of the sample covered over a limited time span.

The questionnaires included Likert scale<sup>7</sup> questions. The Z-test was utilised. Lucey T (1986) stated that for samples higher than 30, the Z-test would be preferable to the *t* test, which covered small sample sizes.

Also, Lucey T (1986) mentioned that Z scores were more likely to be in line with the normal distribution pattern, which is characteristic of descriptive research. Additionally, correlation tests were partially used to check the consistency and validity of certain options within observed and expected figures.

### **Strategy 1: Unions and Innovation**

Innovation was considered as a variable that influences the performance of trade unions. Innovation included the usage of IT-based tools to communicate with employees, the use of e-mails and various related tools, the ability to master change management or succession, the ability to decentralise decision-making, and the ability to empower employees.

To test the hypotheses, a mixed methodology was used where quantitative questions could test the validity of the hypothesis but qualitative questions could be also useful in supporting key issues within the research question. As the researcher used the questionnaire system, he undertook every effort to ensure that respondents could feel at ease at responding both open-ended and closed questions while these indirectly contributed to testing the hypothesis in question.

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#### **Item 1: Respondents' assessment of communication frequency with electronic media**

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<sup>7</sup> Likert Scales were deemed appropriate to elicit statistical evaluations for the dissertation by rating the scales. Since the research was descriptive in nature, scales could give a more rational interpretation of findings including the testing of hypotheses.

Respondents were assessed in relation to the frequency of communication that they had with existing new techniques like electronic media. The results are displayed as follows.

Table 4

*Frequency of using innovative communication*

For each option provided, the options were scaled. The weakest option was scaled 1, the 2<sup>nd</sup> option was scaled 2 and the highest option was scaled 3. R<sub>A</sub> means Public Respondents and R<sub>B</sub> means Private respondents.  $\sigma$  stands for standard deviation, n refers to sample size and SE means the Standard Error.

<i>Option</i>	R <sub>A</sub>	Scale	R <sub>B</sub>	Scale
Never	36	36	14	14
Sometimes	15	30	13	26
Very Often	15	45	2	6
	Mean	$\sigma$	n	
A: Public	1.68	0.83	66	
B: Private	1.59	0.63	29	
SE of Means A and B	0.057	Z Value	1.58	

The weighted mean of each type of union or organisation is calculated. Mean value of A was  $M = 1.68$ . Mean value of B was  $M = 1.59$ .  $H_0$ : mean value of A = mean value of B.  $H_1$ : mean value of A  $\neq$  mean value of B. Standard deviation A was  $S = 0.83$  and Standard deviation B was  $S = 0.63$ . Standard error of both means A and B were 0.057. The Z calculation is mean A-mean B divided by standard error of both means A & B was  $Z = +1.58$ . The score for a two-tailed test at the 5% level is 1.96. As the calculated Z score of +1.58 is within this value, there is nothing to suggest that there is a difference between the two means.  $H_0$  was accepted.

The finding goes more in the range of sometimes which is a measure of how unions might be poor in developing their communication strategy.

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**Item 2: Respondents' assessment of new techniques for communication**

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Public and private unions' employees were assessed regarding how they viewed new techniques for communication. In both cases, these were rated above 80% meaning a high level of correlation for both unions.

Table 5

*New techniques for communication*

<i>Options</i>	$R_A$	Percentage	$R_B$	Percentage
Yes- Interested in new techniques	54	82	26	90
No- Not Interested in new techniques	12	18	3	10

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Fisher's exact test was formulated for this item provided that the sum of rows and columns did not exceed 120. The two-tailed  $p$  value was computed  $p = 0.5419$ . The association between rows (groups) and columns (outcomes) is considered to be not statistically significant. Hence, the hypothesis that respondents in both types of unions favour new techniques of communication is accepted regardless of to which union they belong.

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**Item 3: Respondents' evaluation extent to which innovative communications technology assist in improving union services**

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Both types of respondents were told to give their views regarding innovative communications technology would assist you in getting the services from their union. The weakest option was scaled 1, the 2<sup>nd</sup> option was scaled 2 and the highest option was scaled 3.  $R_A$  means Public Respondents and  $R_B$  means Private respondents.  $\sigma$  stands for standard deviation,  $n$  refers to sample size and SE means the Standard Error.

Table 6

*Evaluation of Innovative communications' impact on services*

<i>Option</i>	$R_A$	Scale	$R_B$	Scale
Very little	4	4	8	8
To some extent	28	56	11	22
Very much	34	102	10	30
	Mean	$\sigma$	n	
A: Public	2.45	0.61	66	
B: Private	2.07	0.80	29	
SE of Means A and B	0.057	Z Value	2.29	

The weighted mean of each type of union or organisation is calculated. Mean value of A was  $M = 2.45$ . Mean value of B was  $M = 2.07$ .  $H_0$ : mean value of A = mean value of B.  $H_1$ : mean value of A  $\neq$  mean value of B. Standard deviation A was  $S = 0.61$  and standard deviation B was  $S = 0.80$ . Standard error of both means A and B were 0.166. The Z calculation is mean A-mean B divided by standard error of both means A & B was  $Z = +2.289$ . The score for a two-tailed test at the 5% level is 1.96. As the calculated Z score of +2.289 is outside this value, there is a significant difference between the two means; the errors are acceptable at the 1% level (99% confidence limits) (i.e.  $H_0$  would be rejected in this special case).

Basing on the size of the group, the sample being lower for private unions can be the cause for the significant difference. The researcher is likely to accept the null hypothesis and reject the actual results. There could be the risk of a **Type I Error** but the assumption is that all result findings may not be totally in the same direction.

#### Item 4: Respondents' Ranking of Innovations provided by unions

To better sort out innovation concepts, respondents were given four innovations to rank. Each item was initially classified regarding their choice and then, such items were weighted. Options were ranked as follows: *Option 1=4, Option 2=3, option 3=2 and Option 4= 1. (Note in this data tabulation, the information is considered as one table for simplification)*

The revised ratings are summarised below:

Public Organisations -A:

OPTION	RATING	1	2	3	4
Decentralised decisions		28	24	20	21
Change management		32	21	32	13
e-technology		42	30	24	10
Empowerment of employees		80	57	10	3

Private Organisations-B

OPTION	RATING	1	2	3	4
Decentralised decisions		12	12	16	11
Change management		4	36	16	5
e-technology		24	15	14	10
Empowerment of employees		84	15	6	0

Each option was added and averaged (divided by 4 since there were 4 classifications).

The table below shows the rating of options with their averages.

Table 7

*Rating Innovations*

RATING AVERAGE	PUBLIC	PRIVATE
Empowerment of employees	37.5	26
e-technology	26.5	16
Change management	24.5	15
Decentralised decisions	23	13

The observations were fairly consistent in that the data looked to be the same in both cases.

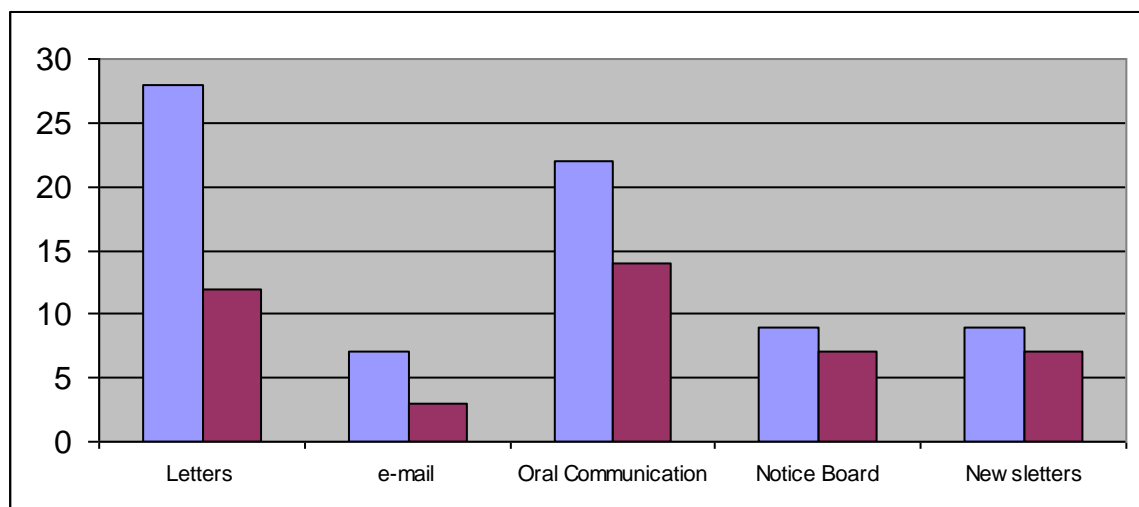
Employee empowerment largely differentiated in terms of innovation. It was not technology that brings innovation to unions essentially but empowerment where employees can undertake their decisions within their unions. It comes from social dialogue, feedback mechanism and democracy within the union which is perceived as innovative. Other issues like e-technology, change and decentralisation followed in a quite logical way.

### Communications Method used by Unions

Respondents were evaluated regarding the communication method that their respective union used. Percentages were evaluated with a bar chart to illustrate the trends.

Figure 1

*Communication Methods Used by Unions*





Letters are the most common form of communication along with oral communication. E-mail is less conventionally used but looks to be an innovation for both unions who are apparently still weak in using this modern form of communication. In both cases, letters and oral communication reveal both the traditional and formal way that unions are using to communicate. Innovation is weak in this area with the same consistent result from both types of unions.

### **Other Forms of Innovation Expected from Respondents**

Respondents from both sectors showed a fair understanding of innovation. Both types of respondents mentioned the benefit that they might get from Intranet and videoconferencing without explaining much about how these would benefit them. Some respondents stated e-meetings while such excerpts are available online without being much consulted. A few responses stated workshops with little mention of how this would benefit them.

### **Conclusion on communications innovation strategy**

Innovation was considered as a condition for trade unions to improve their credibility in modern times when technology has become more widely used by different partners. Unions would have to use new forms of technology as a means of innovation. Both types of respondents from today's unions broadly voiced an inclination towards innovation and that this improves the visibility of unions today.

### **Strategy 2: Bargaining Power of Union leaders in Mauritius**

This area of the study focused on bargaining power of union leaders in Mauritius. It aimed at evaluating how union leaders were using effectively their negotiation techniques. A range of questions were asked to assess how effective leadership through bargaining powers were actually in Mauritius with independent samples that represented both public and private sector employees.

The key research question was:

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**Item 5: Respondents' rating of bargaining tactics of the union leaders**

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Respondents were invited to rate the bargaining tactics of their union leaders. Each option was scaled: *Poor-1, Average-2, Good-3 and Excellent-4*. The results are shown:

Table 8

*Rating bargaining tactics of union leaders*

<i>Option</i>	<i>R<sub>A</sub></i>	<i>Scale</i>	<i>R<sub>B</sub></i>	<i>Scale</i>
Poor	10	10	3	3
Average	36	72	15	30
Good	18	36	9	27
Excellent	2	8	1	4
	Mean	$\sigma$	n	
A: Public	2.18	0.72	66	
B: Private	2.29	0.71	28	
SE of Means A and B	0.057	Z Value	-0.69	

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The mean of each type of union or organisation is calculated. Mean value of A was  $M = 2.18$ . Mean value of B was  $M = 2.29$ .  $H_0$ : mean value of A = mean value of B.  $H_1$ : mean value of A  $\neq$  mean value of B. Standard deviation A was  $S = 0.72$  and Standard deviation B was  $S = 0.71$ . Standard error of both means A and B = 0.16. The Z calculation is mean A-mean B divided by standard error of both means A & B was Z were -0.69. The score for a two-tailed test at the 5% level is 1.96. As the calculated Z score of -0.69 is within this value, there is nothing to suggest that there is a difference between the two means. (i.e  $H_0$  would be accepted). The bipartite was considered as quite interesting since it could have been in its early implementation stage-some sort of innovation.

**Item 6: Respondents' rating of union intervention in bargaining**

Respondents were invited to rate union intervention in bargaining. Each option was scaled: *Poor-1, Average-2, Good-3 and Excellent-4*. The results are shown below:

Table 9

*Union intervention in bargaining*

<i>Option</i>	$R_A$	Scale	$R_B$	Scale
Poor	15	15	4	4
Average	29	58	12	24
Good	19	57	10	30
Excellent	3	12	2	8
	Mean	$\sigma$	n	
A: Public	2.15	0.83	66	
B: Private	2.36	0.83	28	
SE of Means A and B	0.187	Z Value	-1.12	

The mean of each type of union or organisation is calculated. Mean value of A was  $M = 2.15$ . Mean value of B was  $M = 2.36$ .  $H_0$ : mean value of A = mean value of B.  $H_1$ : mean value of A  $\neq$  mean value of B. Standard deviation A was  $S = 0.83$  and Standard deviation B was  $S = 0.83$ . Standard error of both means A and B were 0.187. The Z calculation is mean A - mean B divided by standard error of both means A & B was  $Z = -1.123$ . The score for a two-tailed test at the 5% level is 1.96. As the calculated Z score of +1.084 is within this value, there is nothing to suggest that there is a difference between the two means. (i.e  $H_0$  would be accepted). The findings illustrate that the union intervention in bargaining was considered to be broadly average. Private employees were slightly more positive than public ones in their rating.

**Item 7: Respondents' evaluation of union leaders in the bargaining process**

Respondents were invited to rate the bargaining tactics of their union leaders. Each option was scaled: *Poor-1, Average-2, Good-3 and Excellent-4*. The results are shown below:

Table 10

*Evaluation of leaders in bargaining*

<i>Option</i>	<i>R<sub>A</sub></i>	<i>Scale</i>	<i>R<sub>B</sub></i>	<i>Scale</i>
Poor	16	16	5	4
Average	20	40	14	28
Good	26	78	9	27
Excellent	4	16	0	0
	Mean	$\sigma$	n	
A: Public	2.27	0.90	66	
B: Private	2.14	0.71	28	
SE of Means A and B	0.187	Z Value	0.747	

The mean of each type of union or organisation is calculated. Mean value of A was  $M = 2.27$ . Mean value of B was  $M = 2.146$ .  $H_0$ : mean value of A = mean value of B.  $H_1$ : mean value of A  $\neq$  mean value of B. Standard deviation A was  $S = 0.90$  and standard deviation B was  $S = 0.71$ . Standard error of both means A and B were 0.174. The  $z$  calculation is mean A - mean B divided by standard error of both means A & B was  $Z = +0.747$ . The score for a two-tailed test at the 5% level is 1.96. As the calculated Z score of +0.747 is within this value, there is nothing to suggest that there is a difference between the two means, i.e.  $H_0$  would be accepted. The findings illustrate that the union leaders in bargaining were considered to be broadly average. Public employees were slightly more positive than private ones in their rating.

**Item 8: Respondents' assessment of the importance of collective bargaining**

Respondents were invited to rate the importance of Collective Bargaining. Each option was scaled: *Not at all-1, A little Important-2, and Very Important-3*. The results are shown below:

Table 11

*Importance of Collective bargaining*

<i>Option</i>	R <sub>A</sub>	Scale	R <sub>B</sub>	Scale
Not at all	0	0	0	0
A little Important	31	62	14	28
Very Important	35	70	14	42
	Mean	$\sigma$	n	
A: Public	2.53	0.50	66	
B: Private	2.50	0.51	28	
SE of Means A and B	0.114	Z Value	0.263	

The mean of each type of union or organisation is calculated. Mean value of A was  $M = 2.53$ . Mean value of B was  $M = 2.50$ .  $H_0$ : mean value of A = mean value of B.  $H_1$ : mean value of A  $\neq$  mean value of B. Standard deviation A was  $S = 0.50$  and Standard deviation B was  $S = 0.51$ . Standard error of both means A and B were 0.114. The  $z$  calculation is mean A - mean B divided by standard error of both means A & B was  $Z = +0.263$ . The score for a two-tailed test at the 5% level is 1.96. As the calculated Z score of +0.263 is within this value, there is nothing to suggest that there is a difference between the two means. (i.e  $H_0$  would be accepted). The findings illustrate that collective bargaining is important to both public and private employees. The rating was more between a little important and very important with a broad mean value of 2.50 out of 4.

### Item 9: Respondents' assessment of qualities of their union leader

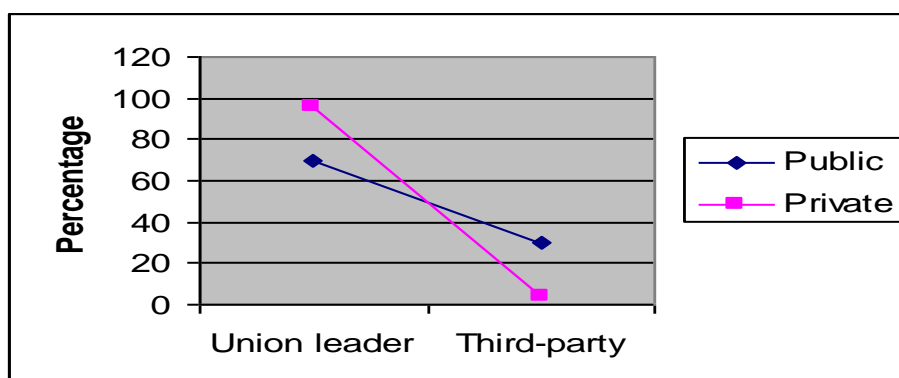
Respondents, in this question were asked to mention the qualities that they would expect from their union leader or representative. The main finding was that the leader should be an *honest* and *trustworthy* individual not willing to serve his/her personal interest. There was the mention of transactional leadership with the objective of getting results since union representatives are appointed to represent their unions and differ, in this sense, from a team leader. Responses also mentioned the following: *knowledgeable person, dynamic and extrovert, active listener, collaborative, pro-active, inspirational, passionate, unbiased*, and so on.

### Negotiation Tactics

Respondents stated their choice regarding the negotiation tactics that their union used. Public unions had the advantage of third party intervention like negotiators in their negotiation while private sector employees essentially focused on direct management intervention.

Figure 2

*Negotiation tactics used by Unions*



In public organisations, 70% of respondents stated that negotiation tactics were better when there was direct intervention with management while 30% considered indirect or third-party intervention to be useful. Comparatively, in the private sector, 96% of respondents favoured

direct intervention with management while only 4% considered indirect or third-party intervention to be essential.

### **Benefits of Bargaining**

The benefits of collective bargaining were asked to the respondents. A popular response was that government responded to union issues especially if they were important. Public sector employees mentioned that conflicts between employer and employees could be avoided. There was also the opportunity to appease conflicts through bargaining. Private sector employees considered that bargaining could be an opportunity for their demands to be met. They could also have the opportunity to voice their problems with management. Other benefits were the sharing of ideas, the benefit of joint consultation and public-private partnership.

### **Drawbacks of Bargaining**

The drawbacks of collective bargaining were asked to the respondents as an open-ended question. The time factor was the most mentioned item in this assessment. Negotiations did not really reach the desired consensus according to several respondents. There was also the mention that it was a formalised approach whereby government or any other partner would use delaying tactics before reaching an agreement.

Private sector employees mentioned that bargaining could sometimes serve the personal interest of leaders who could benefit from such matters and consolidate their image within their organisation.

### **Conclusion on leadership and bargaining tactics strategy**

In this survey, all the responses showed that there was no statistical difference between the means calculated and that each option could be interpreted without any major restraint. In the present context, the bargaining tactics of unions have been well rated and appreciated by respondents. There is also the perception that leaders are quite appreciated in

the bargaining process and their relevance is appreciated. Respondents consider collective bargaining as an important factor of the organisation since it opens up the way for employees to benefit from positive outcomes from negotiations.

### Strategy 3: Social Partnership

Social partnership involves the collaboration of employers and employees in handling employee relation issues. The main argument for the research was to see how well partnership could be developed in the organisation and how this would develop more harmonious employee relations with more stability at work. Respondents were assessed on the relevance of social partnership, areas where it would be effectively applied including the benefits or drawbacks that they could experience from such a strategy. 94 respondents from both sectors answered the questions but some found the theme new and rather challenging to answer.

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#### Item 10: Respondents' rating of relations between the employee and the employer

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The question aimed at assessing relations between the employee and employers.

Relations were rated as follows: *Poor-1, Average-2, Good-3 and Excellent-4.*

Table 12

#### *Social partnership relations*

<i>Option</i>	<i>R<sub>A</sub></i>	<i>Scale</i>	<i>R<sub>B</sub></i>	<i>Scale</i>
Poor	10	10	5	5
Average	16	32	8	16
Good	40	120	12	36
Excellent	0	0	3	12
	Mean	$\sigma$	n	
A: Public	2.45	0.75	66	
B: Private	2.46	0.92	28	

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SE of Means A and B	0.197	Z Value	-0.051
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The mean of each type of union or organisation is calculated. Mean value of A was  $M = 2.45$ . Mean value of B was  $M = 2.46$ .  $H_0$ : mean value of A = mean value of B.  $H_1$ : mean value of A  $\neq$  mean value of B. Standard deviation A was  $S = 0.75$  and Standard deviation B was  $S = 0.92$ . Standard error of both means A and B were 0.197. The Z calculation is mean A - mean B divided by standard error of both means A & B was  $Z = -0.051$ . The score for a two-tailed test at the 5% level is 1.96. As the calculated Z score of -0.051 is within this value, there is nothing to suggest that there is a difference between the two means. (i.e.  $H_0$  would be accepted). The findings illustrate that relations between employer and employee were generally good with a mean value that exceeded the average scale showing that relations were broadly good.

#### Item 11: Respondents' relation of Social Partnership to Co-operation

Respondents were asked to assess how far social partnership would build up co-operation between management and employees. The views were rated as follows: *Not at all-1, A little-2, Fairly-3 and Very much-4*.

Table 13

#### *Relating partnership to Co-operation*

Option	R <sub>A</sub>	Scale	R <sub>B</sub>	Scale
Not at all	3	3	2	2
A little	16	32	8	16
Fairly	25	75	12	36
Very much	22	88	6	24
	Mean	$\sigma$	n	
A: Public	3.00	0.88	66	

B: Private	2.79	0.88	28
SE of Means A and B	0.198	Z Value	1.06

The mean of each type of union or organisation is calculated. Mean value of A was  $M = 3.00$ . Mean value of B was  $M = 2.79$ .  $H_0$ : mean value of A = mean value of B.  $H_1$ : mean value of A  $\neq$  mean value of B. Standard deviation A was  $S = 0.88$  and Standard deviation B was  $S = 0.88$ . Standard error of both means A and B were 0.198. The  $z$  calculation is mean A - mean B divided by standard error of both means A & B was  $Z = +1.06$ . The score for a two-tailed test at the 5% level is 1.96. As the calculated Z score of +1.06 is within this value, there is nothing to suggest that there is a difference between the two means. (i.e.  $H_0$  would be accepted). The findings illustrate that social partnership was a good tactic at bringing co-operation. Both public and private employees consolidated this view.

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**Item 12: Respondents' assessment of the extent of union involvement in Social Partnership**

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Respondents were asked to assess the extent to which their union would be involved in social partnership. The views were rated as follows: *Not at all-1, A little-2, Fairly-3 and Very much-4*.

Table 14

*Union involvement in partnership*

Option	R <sub>A</sub>	Scale	R <sub>B</sub>	Scale
Not at all	4	4	0	0
A little	10	20	7	14
Fairly	32	96	13	39
Very much	20	80	8	32

	Mean	$\sigma$	n
A: Public	3.03	0.84	66
B: Private	3.04	0.74	28
SE of Means A and B	0.174	Z Value	0.057

The mean of each type of union or organisation is calculated. Mean value of A was  $M=3.03$ . Mean value of B was  $M=3.04$ .  $H_0$ : mean value of A = mean value of B.  $H_1$ : mean value of A  $\neq$  mean value of B. Standard deviation A was  $S= 0.84$  and Standard deviation B was  $S=0.74$ . Standard error of both means A and B were 0.174. The Z calculation is mean A - mean B divided by standard error of both means A & B was  $Z = +0.057$ . The score for a two-tailed test at the 5% level is 1.96. As the calculated Z score of +0.057 is within this value, there is nothing to suggest that there is a difference between the two means. (i.e.  $H_0$  would be accepted). The findings illustrate that both types of employees wanted a good involvement of both partners with regards to the mean score that both provided.

### **The Reason behind considering Social Partnership**

Public employees explained that social partnership was an opportunity for managers to take advantage of employee collaboration while private employees were keener to state that social partnership was aimed at creating a good corporate image.

In Public Organisations, 40% assumed that partnership would create compromises easily, 35% expressed that partnership would take advantage of employee collaboration and 25% related partnership to the creation of a good corporate image.

In Private Organisations, 50% expressed that partnership would take advantage of employee collaboration, 28% assumed that partnership would create compromises easily, and 22% related partnership to the creation of a good corporate image

### **Relating Social Partnership as an attempt to avoid Unions**

Respondents were asked to state how social partnership could represent an option to avoid unions. Union leaders coined the idea. The responses were mixed. Those in favour mentioned the following: the benefit of participation, the advantage of having frank and open discussion, the opportunity of meeting leaders including the chance of getting better outcomes through partnership. Negative responses claimed that social partnership could eventually take the place of unions and render them obsolete. There was also the mention that leaders could predominate over employees in social partnership. Broadly, the positive answers outweighed the negative ones.

### **Conclusion on social partnership strategy**

In this survey, all the responses showed that there was no statistical difference between the means calculated and that each option could be interpreted without any major restraint. Social partnership is widely approved by respondents who are satisfied with the expectations that they will have from it as well as the benefits of social partnership. In a work environment where uncertainty prevails, social partnership can bridge differences and nurture better understanding through collaboration between the two partners.

### **Strategy4: Globalisation**

Globalisation is today's popular theme in all spheres of business and it directly affects any organisation. Concerning trade unions, it can be accepted that global forces impact on human resource management and employee relations. Globalisation may have several influences like privatising the workplace, redefining employee relations in a more competitive environment while at the same time, favouring the convergence of beliefs and strategies in a more uniform way globally.

Since no environment can be spared global forces, the issue was developed for research purposes to see how far and well trade unions in Mauritius understand global forces and attempt to tune themselves with global changes.

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**Item 13: Respondent's opinion of globalisation**

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Respondents were asked to select options whereby globalisation had a direct impact on their unions. Four options were proposed and a single choice was allowed in this case.

Table 15

*Respondent's opinion of globalisation*

<i>Options</i>	Public	Private
Lessens the importance of trade unions	14	5
Makes trade unions more vulnerable	7	7
Enforces trade unions to modernise	37	14
Renders trade unions obsolete	8	2

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A two-tailed test was carried out to check the  $p$ -value of the outcomes and ensure that they were consistent with the sample.

The two-tailed test probabilities gave the following:  $P_a$  and  $P_b = 0.364$ . Since the  $p$ -value exceeded 0.05, the test probabilities were not considered to be statistically significant.

The findings correctly highlighted, with minimal errors, that globalisation better enforces trade unions to modernise in both sectors although samples could also mention that unions could become less important in a globalised world.

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**Item 14: Respondent's choice of the global forces that affect trade unions**

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Respondents were asked to state one of the four options regarding what global forces could represent to unions. Options covered issues like privatisation, unemployment, competition and instability.

Table 16

*Respondent's choice of the global forces*

<i>Options</i>	Public	Private
Greater need for privatisation	7	5
Loss or the threat of losing jobs	16	10
Intense competition	28	11
Lower level of stability	15	2

A two-tailed test was carried out to check the p-value of the outcomes and ensure that they were consistent with the sample. The two-tailed test probabilities gave the following:  $P_a$  and  $P_b = 0.205$ . The findings correctly highlighted that competition was a significant factor affecting trade unions especially from the external environment. A close option was the threat of unemployment which could also be a sequel of competition. These forces are affecting the Mauritian workplace now namely the rise of China and emerging developing nations in global business.

**Item 15: Respondent's view of globalisation and organisation future**

Respondents were asked to give their views regarding how they would regard globalisation in the future. This was an exercise to assess either anticipated pessimism or positivism regarding employees in a global economic order, already since 1995.

Table 17

*Views on globalisation*

<i>Option</i>	R <sub>A</sub>	Scale	R <sub>B</sub>	Scale
Negative	3	3	1	1
Fairly Positive	55	110	22	44

Very Positive	8	24	5	15
	Mean	$\sigma$	n	
A: Public	2.07	0.404	66	
B: Private	2.14	0.45	28	
SE of Means A and B	0.098	Z Value	-0.0723	

The weighted mean of each type of union or organisation is calculated, Mean value of A was  $M=2.07$ , Mean value of B was  $M=2.14$ ,  $H_0$ : mean value of A = mean value of B,  $H_1$ : mean value of A  $\neq$  mean value of B. Standard deviation A was  $S=0.40$  and Standard deviation B was  $S=0.45$ . Standard errors of both means were 0.0982. The Z score was -0.723. The score for a two-tailed test at the 5% level is 1.96. Also the  $F$ -test value was 1.2 with a  $p$ -value of 0.27 which is greater than 0.05

As the calculated Z score of -0.723 is within this value, there is nothing to suggest that there is a difference between the two means, and thus the null hypothesis was accepted. Consequently, no significant difference is found about information channelled by unions to both unions.

Employees were therefore quite positive regarding the future of their organisation in view of global forces with the perception that globalisation should rather offer them challenges and opportunities rather than threats and gloom.

### **Awareness Regarding Globalisation**

The first question aimed at finding out whether the global environment had an effect on the activities of trade unions. The term globalisation was well known to the respondents who admitted that the issue affected the activities of their union. Above 85% of respondents from both sectors confirmed the importance of the issue. 86% of public respondents were aware of globalisation compared with 96% of private sector respondents. Both organisations,

public and private, favoured the importance of globalisation in the agenda of trade unions in the current employee relations context.

### **Assessing Leaders in a Global Environment**

Respondents had to state whether their leaders were prepared to face globalisation. A single option was asked to check leaders' exposure to global forces. Generally, leaders were prepared to face globalisation issues on their agenda with a majority favouring their knowledge of global threats. Percentages were 55% and 64% respectively for public and private employees. Since the private sector is more vulnerable to global forces, private leaders were expected to have more exposure to the global concept.

### **Globalisation in Union's Agendas**

Respondents had to state whether globalisation was a feature in the union's agendas. A single option was asked to check its presence on union agendas. 40% of public sector employees found it important in their agenda while 60% of private sector employees considered it to be very important. It was concluded that globalisation was better present in private union's agendas than in public sector agendas. As mentioned above, private jobs run higher the risk of becoming redundant and less predictable in Mauritius and this could be a reason why it was more present in private unions' agendas than public ones. The sample was correct within acceptable limits since this could be more of an indication of employees who are in a vulnerable sector.

### **Globalisation and Jobs**

Respondents had to state whether globalisation affected the job of the respondents. A single option was asked to verify the statements. 70% of public employees stated that globalisation affected their jobs while 75% of private employees favoured the statement. Public and private employees responded in the same way with over 70% responses stating that global issues affected their jobs. Globalisation is a political agenda in Mauritius and



concepts like 24/7 work system, the deregulation of working hours, the privatisation of jobs, and so on influenced the choice of respondents. These issues are currently well developed in the press and the various media showing that globalisation affects jobs in Mauritius.

### **Conclusion on globalisation strategy**

There were broadly good correlations between public and private unions regarding globalisation and the future of trade unions wherever applicable. This meant that unions are seriously considering globalisation in their agendas and are very keen to consider how it would be of benefit to them at a time when the challenges are becoming more consequential in Mauritius.

The *p*-values were measurements of probability that confirmed that results were well within the acceptable limits of accuracy. Generally *p*-values that exceeded 0.05 showed higher levels of consistency in the findings. In a general sense, respondents were aware that globalisation impacted on business and that it shaped the way in which businesses operated. This was true for Mauritian companies, employees and unions since the economy has always focused on the external environment given that Mauritius is an export-based economy.

The perils of globalisation come from a lack of anticipation or foresight regarding future uncertainties, the short sightedness of leaders or managers including a mitigated role of unions that just look for immediate workplace relief. In general, it is seen that unions need to review their agenda, accommodate globalisation as a common feature and attempt at looking forward to challenges and ultimately, long-term benefits from globalisation.

### **Strategy 5: Female Empowerment**

Empowerment of union members has been quite a popular debate among unions in the Mauritian workplace. It has been stated that the issue is better focused on women who have minimal roles to play in unions and are not actively involved as members. To some

extent, this could be a practice that discourages an increase in union membership and avoids the diversity element among unions.

In recent times, women have come to the forefront of employee relations where they have been discriminated but attempted to raise their voices against such malpractice. This matter can be nuanced since women may be more fearful to join unions in order to avoid work-related problems. On the other hand, it may sensitise union leaders to consider the importance of giving more opportunities to women through empowerment. The questions that follow in this section attempt to see how well women could be empowered to access to better involvement at work.

In these last two research tests, 70 respondents from the public sector were identified and 28 from the private sector. All employees were unionised and this showed greater interest from respondents to answer the set of questions.

#### **Item 16: Respondents' views concerning the encouragement of women to join unions**

Respondents were asked to state their views regarding the encouragement that women received to join unions. Four options were given with their relative scales: *Not at all-1, a little-2, Fairly well-3 and Very well-4*. The results are displayed below:

Table 18

*Views regarding womens' encouragement*

<i>Option</i>	<i>R<sub>A</sub></i>	<i>Scale</i>	<i>R<sub>B</sub></i>	<i>Scale</i>
Not at all	9	9	2	2
A little	30	60	9	18
Fairly well	19	76	14	42
Very well	12	48	13	52
	Mean	$\sigma$	n	

A: Public	2.49	0.93	70
B: Private	3.00	1.05	28
SE of Means A and B	0.227	Z Value	-2.24

The weighted mean of each type of union or organisation is calculated, Mean value of A was  $M=2.49$ , Mean value of B was  $M=3.00$ ,  $H_0$ : mean value of A = mean value of B,  $H_1$ : mean value of A  $\neq$  mean value of B., Standard deviation A was  $S=0.93$  and Standard deviation B was  $S=1.05$ . Standard error of both means were 0.227,  $Z=-2.24$ . The score for a two-tailed test at the 5% level is 1.96. As the calculated Z score of -2.24 is beyond this value, there is a significant difference between the two means, and the possibility of an error which might be a Type-I error. The null hypothesis was however accepted. The variation was pronounced since public sector employees found the encouragement weak while private sector employees contrasted by stating that the encouragement was very strong. The null hypothesis was accepted with the F-test supporting that variances showed little significant differences.

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**Item 17: Respondents' views concerning how well women participate in unions**

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Respondents were asked to give their views regarding how well women get along in union activities. Four scales were chosen: *Not at all-1, A little-2, Quite well-3 and Very well-4*. The responses are displayed below:

Table 19

*Extent of female engagement*

Option	R <sub>A</sub>	Scale	R <sub>B</sub>	Scale
Not at all	7	7	2	2
A little	41	82	13	26

Fairly well	13	39	9	27
Very well	9	36	4	16
	Mean	$\sigma$	n	
A: Public	2.34	0.83	70	
B: Private	2.54	0.84	28	
SE of Means A and B	0.187	Z Value	-1.07	

The weighted mean of each type of union or organisation is calculated, Mean value of A was  $M=2.34$ , Mean value of B was  $M=2.54$ ,  $H_0$ : mean value of A = mean value of B,  $H_1$ : mean value of A  $\neq$  mean value of B. Standard deviation A was  $S=0.83$  and Standard deviation B was  $S=0.84$ . Standard error of both means were 0.187,  $Z = -1.07$ . The score for a two-tailed test at the 5% level is 1.96. As the calculated Z score of -1.07 is within the limits, there is no significant difference between the two means. The findings confirmed that women were a little performing in unions. This view could be associated with their low level of involvement and their minimal role that they actually play. In private unions, respondents also suggested that they played their role quite well (32%).

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**Item 18: Respondents' ranking of the effort leaders can do to favour women integration in unions**

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Respondents were asked to rank in order of preference the effort that leaders would undertake to better represent women in unions. Options were ranked as follows: *Option 1=4, Option 2=3, option 3=2 and Option 4= 1*

The revised ratings are summarised below:

Public Organisations -A

OPTION	RATING	1	2	3
Offer them more responsible positions		45	42	4

Increase female membership in unions	69	12	15
Deliberately offer them key positions to create a balance between both sexes in unions	48	12	15

Private Organisations -B

OPTION	RATING	1	2	3
Offer them more responsible positions	42	14	1	
Increase female membership in unions	15	4	3	
Deliberately offer them key positions to create a balance between both sexes in unions	18	2	6	

Each option was added and averaged (divided by 3 since there were 3 classifications).

The table below shows the rating of options with their averages.

Table 20

*Rating Issues*

RATING AVERAGE	PUBLIC	PRIVATE
<i>Offer them more responsible positions</i>	30.3	19
<i>Increase female membership in unions</i>	32	7.3
<i>Deliberately offer them key positions to create a balance between both sexes in unions</i>	25	8.6

The observations were slightly contrasting depending upon the specific nature of each sector. For example, increasing female membership was highly rated among public respondents. The argument that gained more acceptances was offering more responsible positions to women in unions. Both categories of employees found the effort worthwhile since responsibility would go in line with authority while women could gain more respect in

unions. The fact that private sector respondents were apprehensive of increasing female membership in unions means that there might be lesser gender discrimination in their union. Co-opting women for key positions was the least accepted option in this research. The two-tailed p-value equalled 0.2268. By conventional criteria, this difference was considered to be not statistically significant.

### Position in the Union

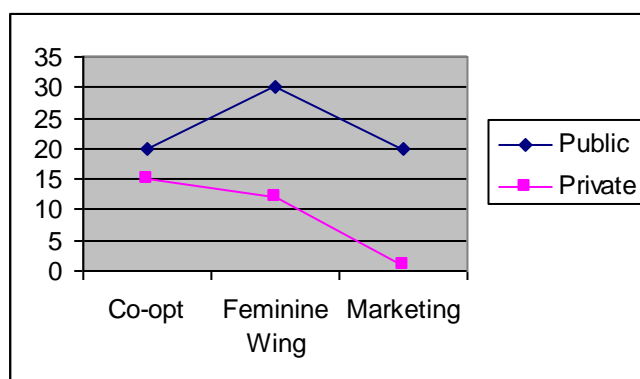
Respondents were asked to state their position in their respective unions. A large number of them stated that they were ordinary members of their union since they had sought membership only. Some 5% respondents stated that they formed part of their union as Executive members having a specific role to play. A much lower percentage considered them to hold prominent roles in their unions as leader, public relations Officer, Secretary and Treasurer. Broadly, most respondents were not actively involved within their unions but showed characteristics whereby they were interested in union matters.

### Effort that Unions can do to Accommodate Women

Respondents were asked to give their views regarding the effort that unions could themselves do to accommodate women in unions. Three options were provided to them where they would select one of them.

Figure 3

*The effort done to accommodate women in unions*



Regarding co-option of women as members, 28% of public employees supported the option compared with 54% from private employees. Regarding the develop a feminine wing in the union and offer quotas to women to join unions, 44% of public sector employees were in favour in the same way as for private employees (43%). Regarding marketing practice to attract women in unions, 28% of public unions favoured the strategy compared with only 3% for private employees. Public unions were keener to say that there should be a feminine wing to accommodate women in unions so that they could have their due representation as members. Private sector employees followed a slightly different path where they preferred having them as co-opted members.

### **Factors Influencing Women to join Unions**

Respondents in public and private sectors, both 45%, stated that it was the macho-stereotype role that encouraged women to join unions since this was visible from the outset that they had a marginal role to play. 27% of public sector respondents added that it was also the outcomes of unions' actions that might force women to join unions compared with 12% of private employees. 28% of private employees might have associated ineffective leadership as a reason that could compel women to join unions compared with 18% of public employees. Disputes among male leaders were the least rated option.

### **Advantage gained from Female Membership in Unions**

The last question in this area was a directional one since it aimed at finding out any advantage that employees could perceive from increased female membership in unions. Answers varied from the 98 respondents who participated in this survey. Popular responses were: The generation of more ideas on union agendas, the importance of having a feminine touch in contemporary unions, the commitment of women in union activities, civilised approach within employee relations, the benefit of etiquette from female collaboration, and so on.

Some answers also noted: The possibility of eliminating the chauvinist attitude in unions, the possibility of achieving better and balanced decisions through female involvement, the opportunity of benefiting from female attitudes like more tact and diplomacy in the bargaining approach. The element of sharing and equality of rights was also mentioned but few responses could mention the importance of creating more balance regarding gender representation since women represent more than 50% of the population in the country and are more widely involved at work.

### **Conclusion on female empowerment**

It could be broadly accepted that respondents agreed that women have been limited in unions due to a lack of encouragement or empowerment. The findings represented contrasts at times between public and private respondents illustrating the acute values of certain answers. There might have been the risk of Type I error where the test rejects the null hypothesis. However, this could also be an incidence of the findings where assumptions regarding women's role in unions could not be taken for granted. Broadly, women need to be encouraged and undertake more serious responsibilities in today's unions.

### **Strategy 6: Fewer but more efficient Trade Unions**

The literature survey explained that there were a large number of unions in Mauritius if the ratio of unionised employees and the three hundred unions could be equated. The former Minister of Employment was critical of this situation and asserted that unions lost their bargaining power during collective bargaining since each one of them came forward with individual arguments that could not be easily tackled by the authorities.

There was the call for a reduction in the number of unions in sectors where there was more a duplication of unions serving the interests of individual leaders and private interests. There was also the affirmative that the end result of the bargaining process was more divisive than unitary as a fact that unions were excessive in number.



The paradox came from the fact that private employees were under-unionised but had a large number of unions serving them.

The survey aimed at finding out the views of employees regarding having fewer members and bigger unions. The term *federation* was mentioned in the survey to see whether employees had come close to the term and whether they could assess the effectiveness of having a larger union to better synthesise the arguments from the workforce. In line with this view, the constraints of larger unions were also mentioned in sectors where employees were low in representative terms and where they were weakly unionised.

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**Item 19: Respondents' view of reducing trade unions to improve in terms of quality and efficiency**

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This item aimed at assessing how far respondents would agree to the statement that by reducing the number of unions, there would be opportunities to have better quality and efficiency. Four scales were chosen: *Totally disagree-1, disagree a little-2, agree a little-3 and totally agree-4.*

Table 21

*Respondents' views on reducing trade unions*

<i>Option</i>	<i>R<sub>A</sub></i>	<i>Scale</i>	<i>R<sub>B</sub></i>	<i>Scale</i>
Totally disagree	2	2	1	1
Disagree a little	8	16	7	14
Agree a little	27	81	10	30
Totally agree	33	132	10	40
	Mean	$\sigma$	n	
A: Public	3.30	0.79	70	
B: Private	3.04	0.88	28	
SE of Means A and B	0.191	Z Value	1.36	

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The weighted mean of each type of union or organisation is calculated, Mean value of A was  $M=3.30$ , Mean value of B was  $M=3.04$ ,  $H_0$ : mean value of A = mean value of B,  $H_1$ : mean value of A  $\neq$  mean value of B. Standard deviation A was  $S=0.79$  and Standard deviation B was  $S=0.88$ . Standard error of both means were 0.191,  $Z=1.36$ . The score for a two-tailed test at the 5% level is 1.96. As the calculated Z score of 1.36 is within this value, there is no significant difference between the two means, the null hypothesis was accepted. There is a good level of agreement between public and private organisations regarding the fact that there should be a reduction in the number of unions. The mean value was more in the range of *agree a little* and employees accepted that the unions should be rationalised.

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**Item 20: Respondents' choice to reduce the large number of unions**

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Respondents had select one of the four options below to state which action would be the most appropriate to reduce the number of unions. The findings are presented overleaf.

Table 22

*Rationalisation of Unions*

<i>Options</i>	Public	Private
Merge unions in the same industry	34	12
Eliminate small Unions	17	7
Enforce single unions in a company	19	9

A two-tailed test was carried out to check the p-value of the outcomes and ensure that they were consistent with the sample.

The two-tailed test probabilities gave the following:  $P_a$  and  $P_b = 0.844$ . Since the  $p$  value exceeded 0.05, the test probabilities were not considered to be statistically significant.

The fairly high probability value was an indication that unions had to be merged in the same

industry as there were more than a single union representing the same interests of the worker. Similar percentages affected items like eliminating and enforcing single unions.

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**Item 21: Respondents' assessment of fewer but more efficient unions**

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Respondents had select one of the four options below to state which option would most appropriately explain the benefit of union rationalisation. The findings are presented below.

Table 23

*Assessment of having fewer but more efficient unions*

<i>Options</i>	Public	Private
Unions can be better focused	8	4
Unions operate with more efficiency	22	10
Unions can achieve more consensus	16	4
Union decisions can be speeded up	14	10

A two-tailed test was carried out to check the p-value of the outcomes and ensure that they were consistent with the sample. The two-tailed test probabilities gave the following:  $P_a$  and  $P_b = 0.5$ . Since the  $p$ -value exceeded 0.05, the test probabilities were not considered to be statistically significant.

The fairly high probability value was an indication that *unions operate with more efficiency* when they are streamlined. The idea was also well supported by the option that *decisions could be speeded up* with fewer unions. Respondents from the public sector also largely supported the fact that *consensus* could be more easily reached while the same option was differently interpreted by private sector employees.

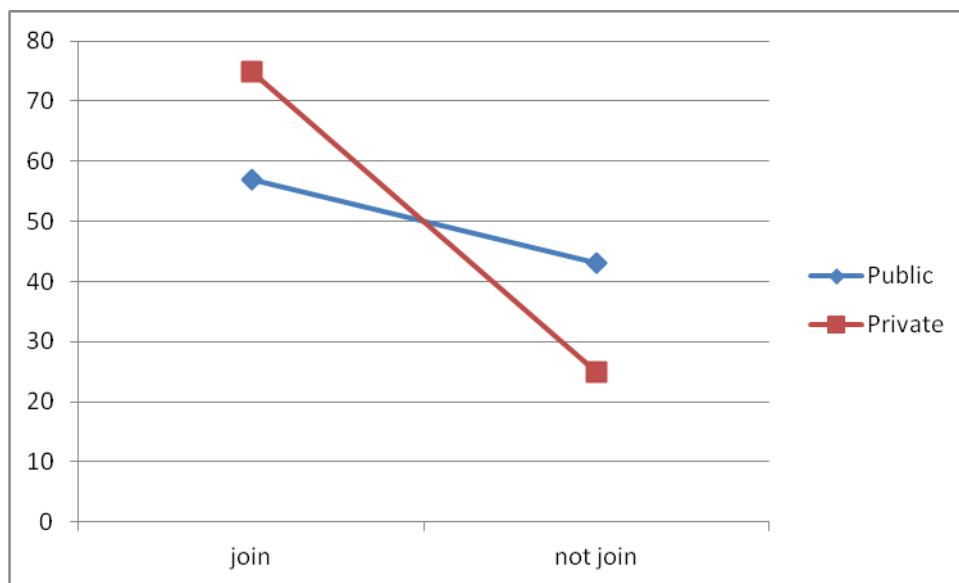
**The Choice of Joining A Larger Union**

Respondents were asked to state whether they would agree or not to join a larger union if the rationalisation of unions would be enforced in their organisation. Broadly, a large number of

employees from both sectors favoured the first option both in the established group and the one under observation. 57% of public respondents wanted to be in a larger union compared to 75% from the private sector. Comparatively, only 25% of private employees did not agree to join bigger unions to 43% from the public sector.

Figure 4

*The choice of joining a larger union*



The figure explains the choice of respondents where the regression line is steeper for private unions calling for a higher need to join larger unions and get better represented. This varies from public unions where employees intend to join larger unions and have less to do with rationalisation. Weak union representation in the private calls for better representation through larger unions which are also better rationalised.

### **The Contribution expected from Fewer but efficient Unions**

The last question of this section aimed at finding out the contribution that respondents could expect from expect from fewer but rationalised unions. Both positive and negative views were accounted.

Positive responses could be resumed as follows: Better focus, time saving, better results, avoidance of self or vested interests from many leaders, better consensus reached,

more professional approach to bargaining, reduction of conflict, improvement in work conditions, higher expectations from few but more powerful unions, and so on.

Negative responses were few but could be synthesised as follows: No major change in outcome, low representation of employees from smaller unions, the risk of powerful leaders who could dominate over others, and so on.

### **Conclusion concerning fewer but efficient union**

The large mean values both from public and private respondents indicated that there was a high level of consistency regarding the results accompanied with reasonable p values (above the minimum limit of acceptability) which illustrated that respondents were in favour of rationalisation. This would provide them with fewer but stronger and more focused unions with suitable agendas. The risk came from small unions which might lose their bargaining power if they were merged into larger unions.

### **Summary and Transition**

This key chapter covered the primary data obtained from the research while it answered all the research questions that were simplified for respondents both from the public and the private sector. It identified the common characteristics of trade unions where questions were asked on current communication systems, leadership expectations or knowledge of globalisation. Respondents mentioned their strengths or weaknesses. The findings mainly covered strategies that trade unions could apply and how these could benefit them in the future. From a global perspective, respondents were mostly in favour of unions adopting new strategies and trends from both from the local and the global context. The next chapter covers conclusions and recommendations for Mauritian trade unions in the future.

## **Chapter Five: Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **Overview**

This concluding chapter brings forward conclusion and recommendations regarding the survey and research work that had been initiated as from October 2009. Six variables namely innovation in communication, leadership, social partnership, union rationalisation, female empowerment and globalisation were researched and these are now reviewed in consistency in this chapter after the findings were statistically evaluated. The methodology initially covers an assessment of the main statistical findings including an interpretation of the major findings. The exercise is followed by an analysis of views of leaders of expert opinion who were individually interviewed since January 2011. Combining or synthesising the different opinions/ findings develops the assumptions.

The dissertation related the problem issue to unions and explained why they have declined in Mauritius. Key reasons that explained the problem were: unions' inability to innovate in their communications strategy, unions' difficulty in bargaining and probably an absence of effective leadership, the failure for unions to recognise that partnership would be of immense help to them, unions' need to attract more female members by empowering them and, an essential component like globalisation that unions might have overlooked so far.

The research was essentially descriptive but to sum up ideas in a more coherent way, the researcher found it important to make use of statistics relevant to such type of research namely the two-tailed tests. These tests could through the z-values state how far the sample and the findings were deemed acceptable. They also confirmed whether differences could exist both in public and private organisations.

To support the key arguments, some charts have been introduced in relation to supplementary questions that were asked to respondents. These might also support the main issues and outcomes developed statistically. To prove the validity of the tests, the panel of

expert opinion firstly analysed the figures and provided its insight into the possible outcomes and presentations.

In the paragraphs below, each recommendation is presented as a finding with recommendations that could be useful for unions to survive in the future.

**Finding One: Unions should innovate in order to attract more members**

Innovation is a condition for trade unions to improve their credibility in modern times when technology has become more widely used by different partners. Unions will have to use new forms of technology as a means of innovation. Both types of respondents from today's unions have broadly voiced an inclination towards innovation and that this improves the visibility of unions today.

Table 24

*Statistical Summary of Innovations of Unions*

ITEM	Mean Value	Mean Value	Sample $\geq 30$
Sub-questions that supported the main assumption	Public	Private	Z-test score
2. <i>Communicating with new techniques</i>	1.68	1.59	+1.58
3. <i>Benefits of Innovative Communications</i>	2.45	2.07	+2.289
4. <i>Rating new techniques for communication</i>	N/A	N/A	0.5419
			Fisher's test

Respondents were assessed on rating the new techniques for communication. Fisher's exact test was formulated for this item. The two-tailed p-value was 0.5419. The hypothesis that respondents in both types of unions favour new techniques of communication was accepted regardless of to which union they belong. This question revealed that unions were

expected to innovate although there has been some reservation from public union leaders whereby the opinion was that innovation would not necessarily determine the union's response to new demands from its employees. Empirical research conducted by Sienghtal and Beckter (2001) showed that unionised workplace promoted integration and co-operation between workers and management, which made them to adopt to innovation that are more conducive to productivity enhancement. Organisations should provide attractive working environments and better rewards for employees and to develop and train them; which can motivate them to innovate (Szell, 1992). Training of workers for their adaptation to the accelerating socio-economic, technological, demographical and other changes can also be integrated with industrial relations to stimulate technological innovation. The implications of these actions are the improved information flow and relations between individuals and groups within the organisations.

Respondents were assessed on communication with new techniques. The mean values were 1.68 and 1.59 respectively for public and private sector employees. The rating was low in this case compared with other questions formulated in this assessment. New modes of communication had not been properly developed although employees believed that e-mail, messaging techniques and virtual platforms of communication would have been worthwhile for them. There is the difference in perception both from unions and employees. Employees in this research were those with a mean age of 35 and had good notions of using information technology and being familiar with it. There was an age gap between employees and union leaders which could explain the result obtained. Employees could favour using new communication modes but they were rarely exposed to them. Also, organisations themselves could not really offer facilities for using the Internet and similar services.

Respondents were evaluated on the benefits of innovative communications. Mean values were relatively high with scores 2.45 and 2.07 for public and private unions



respectively. The difference in values could be explained from the fact that government employees favoured innovative communications more than private sector employees. Public sector employees have been more exposed to union issues through communication and this explained the higher mean value from their responses. In private organisations, this opportunity may not have been favoured.

### **The Importance of Innovation Technologies**

Respondents from both sectors showed a fair understanding of innovation. Both types of respondents mentioned in a question the benefit that they might get from Intranet and videoconferencing without explaining much about how these would benefit them.

Some respondents stated e-meetings while such excerpts are available online without being much consulted. A few responses stated workshops with little mention of how this would benefit them.

### **The Development of Social Networking**

The research did not cover the latest innovations like social networking developed by Facebook or Twitter. With an increase in the number of users and the facilities that these innovative forms of technology that are now available to any user, there is a justified argument to say that unions could also use social networking to innovate and better attain their audiences. This concept has already influenced communication in Mauritius but it remains to be seen how their expansion could enable unions to benefit from these powerful tools of communication. Already, the “Jasmine revolution” in Northern Africa (Maghreb) evidences the pervasive influence of social networking.

### **The Importance of Empowerment**

*Employee empowerment* was also mentioned as a form of innovation apart from technology. It was not technology that only brought innovation to unions essentially but empowerment where employees could undertake their decisions within their unions. It came

from social dialogue, feedback mechanism and democracy within the union which is perceived as innovative. Other issues like e-technology change and decentralisation followed in a quite logical way.

### **The Panel of Expert Opinion**

The views of leaders of expert opinion are presented on this issue. All experts were individually interviewed over a three-month exercise during the months of October 2010 to February 2011 depending on the availability of such experts on the various research areas and their views are presented. Note that academics Gunesh and Saurty were interviewed in 2010 and they offered a common response from the academic expert panel.

### **The Members of the Panel of Expert Opinion**

The panel of Expert Opinion that gave its opinion and inputs in the research is presented below:

Table 25

*Members of panel of expert opinion*

<b>Member</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Expertise</b>
Gunesh P	University of Mauritius	Human Resource Management academic
Saurty K M	Université des Mascareignes	Social Sciences, management and quality assurance academic
Chuttoo R	Confederation of Private Sector Employees (CTSP)	National leader of main private sector federation
Imrith R	Government General Services Union (GGSU)	President of one of the most powerful public sector

		federations
Venkatasamy T	Ex-Management Trust Fund	Long-term serving president
	Union	of a staff association

The panel members were independently interviewed with the six key strategies identified. The objective was to see how close or different their reasoning was and how their input could support the strategies defined regarding union survival in Mauritius. A simple coding method was used to show their consistency either with the findings **(F)** or literature review **(L)** or both wherever applicable.

### **Views of the panel on Communications Innovation**

#### **Chuttoo (2011)**

- Innovation was essential in today's unions. **(L) (F)**
- The CTSP organisation had been keen onto communicating through mobile technologies and the Internet. **(F)**
- An issue directly impacting on private sector employees namely AIDS campaigns and sensitisation on inflation were recorded on DVDs and these were offered to members on request.

#### **Imrith (2011)**

- Innovation in technologies was well sought after by unions but might not be quite effective in the public sector especially the clerical services that his union represented. **(L)**
- Today's union agendas were effectively covered through the traditional means of communication. **(F)**

#### **Venkatasamy (2011)**

- Innovation was essential to unions. **(L) (F)**

- To attain the target audience, communication techniques like *sms* and e-mails were used although circulars still found their importance in the union's communication strategy. **(F)**

**Saurty and Gunesh (2010)**

- Unions had to innovate in today's environment since their lack of vision could also lead to their loss of credibility and even their failure. **(L) (F)**
- Innovation could also be implemented by leaders having vision and by considering union regeneration with younger leaders capable of inspiring their members. **(L)**
- Younger leaders are more technologically-oriented.
- Younger leaders could more effectively bring in innovation and concepts of innovation to ensure the survival of unions.

**Conclusive remarks on innovation in communications**

Innovation is a key issue in understanding how unions can cope more effectively in today's business environment. Actually, unions are experiencing some revival because their agenda is focused on today's economic reality where the consumer's purchasing power has eroded in the middle of global chronic recession coupled with the food crisis.

In such circumstance, the union gets more powerful and credible when it sets agendas that are in line with today's needs. There is a feeling of innovation in this context because the success of union movements depends also upon how the media is actually portraying major social changes at the international level. This influences society in developing nations and union leaders. For example, the Arab crisis known as "le printemps de jasmin"<sup>8</sup> (The

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<sup>8</sup> The Arab Spring in 2011 started in Algeria where the initiator Bouazizi immolated himself in a protest at Al Tahrir Square against autocratic regime in the country while the success of the initiative depended a lot on the informal use of social media like Internet, Facebook, short messages, etc.

Arab Spring) explains the rise of social groups through innovative technologies like the Internet, Facebook and Twitter capable of sensitising public opinion.

Unions in Mauritius might not necessarily consider such type of innovation but, in its inception, explains that innovative technologies can call for better mobilisation or sensitisation. Conventions in the traditional way have not drawn to much attention but innovative approaches to marketing can have positive feedback on unions. This can also be explained by the fact that union members are likely to be younger and such people will be more apt to communicate, discuss and network through more sophisticated means. However, all these cannot be taken for granted since the majority of young employees and probably future union members have not yet sought to be unionised.

**Finding Two: Collective bargaining is essential in trade union agendas and union leaders must have effective bargaining power to gain confidence from their members.**

This area of the study focused on bargaining powers of unions in Mauritius. It aimed at evaluating how union leaders were using effectively their negotiation techniques. The statistical data from the findings are analysed.

Table 26

*Statistical Summary of effectiveness of Union leaders*

ITEM	Mean Value	Mean Value	Sample $\geq 30$
Sub-questions that supported the main assumption	Public	Private	Z-test score
5. Bargaining tactics of union	2.18	2.29	-0.69
6. Union intervention in bargaining	2.15	2.36	-1.123
7. Evaluation of leaders	2.27	2.14	0.747
8. Importance of collective bargaining	2.53	2.50	0.263

Respondents were asked to evaluate the bargaining tactics of their union. The mean values obtained were 2.18 and 2.29 respectively for public and private unions. This implied that the rating was between average and good. Private sector employees were more positive on rating their leaders in their bargaining tactics. This could be explained from the capability of private companies and leaders to bargain collectively in an efficient way. There are generally more issues of critical importance in private than government institutions and this explains both the importance of collective bargaining and the need for effective leaders. The lower mean value for public sector organisations explained that leaders had lesser power to deal effectively in collective bargaining.

A question aimed at assessing the intervention of unions in collective bargaining. Mean values were 2.15 and 2.36 respectively for public and private sector employees. These values explained the relatively high importance that employees gave to unions and their leaders in the bargaining process. Private sector employees were keener to have their unions in the negotiation process. It is broadly agreed that employees have high expectancies from their unions in the negotiation process. This argument can also be supported from the fact that the next salary revisions by the Pay Research Bureau in 2013 calls for effective intervention and negotiations from unions since these reflect both a demand for salary increase coupled with work conditions that may change and affect the nature of work.

Another question aimed at assessing the quality of leaders in collective bargaining. Answers were more in the range of average and good with mean values 2.27 and 2.14 for public and private organisations respectively with a Z-score of 0.747. This implied that findings were consistent for both categories of respondents while at the same time proved that leaders were broadly average in bargaining. This ascertained the fact that one problem of today's unions remained in this area where average leadership was not strong enough to keep up their credibility.

Respondents were assessed on the importance of collective bargaining as a key feature of negotiations at the workplace. The mean values obtained were 2.53 and 2.50 respectively for public and private unions. The score was high and rather negatively skewed. This explained the importance that employees gave to collective bargaining at the place of work. In a democratic workplace, employees pay attention to the fact that they represent an important element in the bargaining process and that their importance must be felt. In difficult economic times, this issue becomes more critical. Collective bargaining gains credibility as the most important aspect of negotiations.

### **Critical Issues regarding Negotiation Tactics**

In non-statistical surveys, one of the key findings was to assess the critical areas for bargaining. *Salary and wages* were the most stated by the respondents and viewed as the main issue in the bargaining process. *Working conditions* were also mentioned as very important issue on the agenda of the union leader. At the organisational level, *postings* to departments and promotion were also on top of union agendas. *Staffing* was also mentioned especially in government departments where employees want to be supported by an adequate number of employees. Private sector employees added *employee welfare* as an important area that deserved to be covered in bargaining.

### **Benefits of Bargaining**

The benefits of collective bargaining were asked to the respondents. A popular response was that government responded to union issues especially if they were important. It has been argued that the terms which trade unions seek to get through collective bargaining, the process by which they are negotiated and the enforcement of the agreement, all depend on the size and strength of the bargaining unit (Okolie, 2010). Public sector employees mentioned that conflicts between employer and employees could be avoided. There was also the opportunity to appease conflicts through bargaining.

Collective bargaining has really helped the employers to gain insights into the problems and aspirations of the workers, while the workers on their own come to know more about the economic and technical problems of management (Okolie, 2010). Private sector employees considered that bargaining could be an opportunity for their demands to be met. They could also have the opportunity to voice their problems with management. Other benefits were the sharing of ideas, the benefit of joint consultation and public-private partnership.

### **Views of panel of expert opinion on Leadership**

All members of the panel of expert opinion gave their interpretation regarding the importance of leadership in collective bargaining at work. The appropriate coding is also affixed.

#### **Chuttoo (2011)**

- Bargaining is an essential condition for the existence of democracy at work. **(L)**  
**(F)**
- There could be higher evidence of leader effectiveness and stronger bargaining power in private organisations although they were weakly unionised. **(F)**
- Work conditions are more precarious in certain industries of the private sector.
- The actual condition requires leaders who have a good agenda which is the need to look after the demands of the workforce. **(F)**

#### **Imrith (2011)**

- Bargaining is an essential condition for the existence of democracy at work. **(L)**  
**(F)**
- Collective bargaining is considered to be an essential component of workplace relations. **(L) (F)**

#### **Venkatasamy (2011)**



- The workplace is now governed by new conditions imposed by the Employment Relations Act 2008. **(L)**
- There could not be only two partners in collective bargaining since government could have its role to play to oversee if there are abuses regarding unfair representation of employees.
- Effective leaders are required to bargain better. **(F)**

**Saurty and Gunesh (2010)**

- Leadership depended upon the capabilities and personality of union leaders. **(L)**  
**(F)**
- Unions and their leaders had to play an important role in the bargaining process.  
**(L) (F)**

**Conclusive remarks on leadership**

This topic covered both the issue of collective bargaining and leader effectiveness. To ensure effective bargaining, leaders must be strong enough to sensitise the opinion of their followers and develop useful agendas that will help them become credible in relation to the employers. In the present case in Mauritius, private sector leaders look to have been better capable of developing both collective bargaining issues with their leadership prowess.

The illustration comes from the fact that unions like the Confederation of Private Sector Employees (CTSP) led by Reeaz Chuttoo, one of the panel experts interviewed in this research, have started to draw greater affluence recently since they are pressing for certain critical issues of collective bargaining. For example, private leaders have mentioned the need to have better compensation to cope with price hikes affecting more people and employees earning low incomes. They have also drawn the attention of the government on abuse made by employers in a recent situation that led to a strike in a Business Process Outsourcing company.

Clearly, leader effectiveness and influence drive unions to achieving better goals and satisfying their members. This comes from suitable and well-defined agendas regarding collective bargaining and the intelligence and vision of leaders. It has been witnessed that employers and the government have shown certain response to such pressing agendas from unions. This explains that leaders having suitable agendas could also be useful for effective collective bargaining.

**Finding Three: Unions may have to include Social Partnership in their agendas as a means to harmonising employee relations**

Social partnership involves the collaboration of employers and employees in handling employee relation issues. The main argument for the research was to see how well partnership could be developed in the organisation and how this would develop more harmonious employee relations with more stability at work. Respondents were assessed on the relevance of social partnership namely areas where it would be effectively applied including the benefits or drawbacks that they could experience from such a strategy. **Table**

Table 27

*Statistical Summary of Social Partnership*

ITEM	Mean Value	Mean Value	Sample $\geq 30$
Sub-questions that supported the main assumption	Public	Private	Z-test score
10. <i>Relations between employers and employees in social partnership</i>	2.45	2.46	-0.051
11. <i>Relating social partnership to co-operation</i>	3.00	2.79	1.06
12. <i>Extent of union involvement in social</i>	3.03	3.04	-0.057

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*partnership*

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Respondents were asked to evaluate relations between employers and employees prior to be engaged in social partnership. The mean values were 2.45 and 2.46 respectively for public and private sector employees. The similar value could explain the positive evaluation of relations which could lead to effective social partnership in organisations. Employees' views could explain that social partnership has its importance in organisations and that this concept should be favoured at work.

Another statistically-based evaluation focused on the relationship between social partnership and co-operation. Private sector leaders have since long spoken on the importance of partnership and this has been criticised by unions as an attempt by employers to avoid workplace unionisation. Public sector respondents gave high ratings and the mean value obtained was 3.00. Positive evaluations were also obtained from private sector employees who also viewed the issue positively with a mean value of 2.79. Dundon (2007) found that a joint management-union task group was particularly important in boosting innovation and problem-solving activity, and much higher investment in employee training, and better communications, has also been vital in this respect.

Another question concerned the extent of union involvement in social partnership. The objective of the question was to see how employees would perceive such partnership through their unions. The mean value obtained from responses of public sector employees was 3.03 and private sector employees rated the issue with a mean value 3.04. It could be synthesised at this level that employees held strong views regarding social partnership and, in particular, the involvement of their union representatives in workplace issues. Such views come from the fact that employees are concerned with workplace harmony in Mauritius since they expect good interaction with management in their day-to-day activities.

In a Irish workplace setting, Dobbins (2007) stated that there was consensus among the social partners in Ireland in that a number of key bottlenecks still required urgent attention through social dialogue - particularly improvements in the area of boosting life-long learning and training opportunities for all - in order to move the Irish economy further along a high value-added high-knowledge trajectory. This argument could well explain why social partnership was equally valued in the Mauritian setting.

### **Two-Tailed Tests on Social Partnership Issues**

In line with Z-tests which were undertaken on social partnership, some tests were undertaken to check the consistency of results from questions analyses in tables. These tests assessed the *p*-value of the outcomes and could decide whether the arguments would be acceptable or not.

### **Assessing Social Partnership as an Attempt to Avoid Unions**

Respondents were asked to state how social partnership could represent an option to avoid unions. Union leaders accepted the idea. The responses were mixed. Those in favour mentioned the following: *the benefit of participation, the advantage of having frank and open discussion, the opportunity of meeting leaders including the chance of getting better outcomes through partnership.*

Negative responses claimed that *social partnership could eventually take the place of unions and render them obsolete.* There was also the mention that *leaders could predominate over employees in social partnership.* Broadly, the positive answers outweighed the negative ones.

### **Views of the panel of expert opinion on Social Partnership**

All members of the panel of expert opinion gave their interpretation regarding the importance of social partnership at work. The appropriate coding is also affixed.

**Chuttoo (2011)**

- Social partnership could not be put into practice in Mauritius given those recent events have shown a higher level of confrontation between employer and employees rather than collaboration.
- In privately-owned companies, leaders could use this concept to “buy” employees and avoid collective bargaining. **(L)**

**Imrith (2011)**

- Social partnership was not much applicable to government employees.
- The State is the public sector employer and intervenes already much in the day-to-day running of government activities.
- In today’s context, there have been decisions imposed by the government on public employees like the application of more stringent measures to combat lateness and absenteeism.
- No partnership is witnessed in public bodies.

**Venkatasamy (2011)**

- The concept is utopian rather than being practical but observed that it could be applicable in situations where there is ideal harmonisation in employee relations.
- This strategy could not apply to Mauritius in the present situation.
- Social partnership could be better revealed between public and private sector leaders than employers.

**Saurty and Gunesh (2010)**

- Social partnership is a key issue in modern union agendas. **(L) (F)**
- Social partnership would be most welcome by employees since they should be viewed as partners at the workplace and even beyond the confinement of the job.  
**(L)**

- Welfare policies in certain multinationals like Google Inc. USA or IBM ensured that employees effectively develop relationships with their firm in the form of a psychological contract. (L)
- The more an employee attaches himself to his firm under partnership, the better will be the outcome of such a process like increased motivation and more focused goals between employee and employer. (F)

### **Conclusive remarks on Social Partnership**

The essence of social partnership remains in the exchange of views in a constructive way between employee and employer. Social partnership (Partenariat Social) has been on the agendas of the employer federation, the Mauritius Employers' Federation in a recent past. The issue arose from the ILO agenda that included social partnership as the essence to the contribution of more durable relations between the two parties concerned at work.

Social partnership has not been well defined in Mauritius and has skipped today's agendas because government has imposed 2% taxation on companies' turnover so that the money could be diverted to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) which is now an obligation for the employer. Consequently, though employers have frowned onto transforming part of their earnings for social causes, the partnership agenda has been partly dismissed for such social action which involves funding, sponsoring and developing infrastructure to assist the vulnerable groups of society.

Social partnership, in practice, develops debate around everything affecting the employee. It can be compensation as well as the future orientation of the company. It should not be an attempt to 'buy' unions or employee representatives by hiding the reality and showing only favourable intentions from the employer. There is much to do in developing social partnership. For example, companies being listed officially in the Stock Exchange of Mauritius allow for the participation of the public.

The survey responses show that employees favour social partnership. They want to collaborate and find it useful that partnerships bring better cohabitation of employers and employees at work.

**Finding Four: Globalisation is a contemporary issue affecting employee relations and has direct influence on the future of unions in Mauritius**

Globalisation remains an important variable that impacts on unions and that will evidently affect how unions will manage in the near future. As a concept developed in the 1990s through the advent of the World Trade Organisation, globalisation now impacts on all sectors affecting the economy, culture, society and so on. Unions have not been spared since global issues impact firstly on the organisation and incidentally on the fate of workers. Respondents have accepted that globalisation affects the nature of their activities and the credibility of the union that supports them.

Table 28

*Statistical Summary of Globalisation*

ITEM				
Sub-questions that supported				
the main assumption		Accepted/Rejected		
	<i>p</i> -value	<i>Two-tailed and Correlation tests</i>		
13. <i>Influence of globalisation on unions</i>	0.364	Accepted- fair correlation public and private unions		
14. <i>Global forces affecting unions</i>	0.205	Accepted- fair correlation public and private unions		
	Mean Value	Mean	Sample $\geq 30$	H <sub>0</sub> accepted/
	Public	Value	Z-test score	rejected
		Private		

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<b>15. Globalisation and</b>	2.07	2.14	-0.723	Accepted
<i>organisation future</i>				

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A question called for the impact of the globalisation on employees. 86% of public respondents confirmed that globalisation had an effect on their work and future and 96% of private sector employees responded in the same way. The influence of globalisation was both in the public and the private organisation. No major difference could be seen from the sample size.

Respondents were asked to state how globalisation influenced their unions. The most sought-after argument was that globalisation forced unions to modernise. Modernisation could be found in communication strategies, gender equality, new agendas for discussion and responsiveness to global changes. The p-value was 0.364 and this confirmed the acceptability of the results. There were responses stating that globalisation could also weaken today's unions in the same way as it could also reduce the importance of unions. Public sector employees better appreciated this view.

Respondents were asked to assess the global forces that affected trade unions. The findings explained that competition was a significant factor affecting trade unions especially from the external environment. Competition could come from developing nations that are competing more openly in the global environment and namely China, India and South-East Asian nations. A close option was the threat of unemployment which could also be a sequel of competition. The era of globalisation has created a novel and complex terrain for labour internationalism where local, regional and global levels interact and where community, consumption and production levels are all present (Munck, 2010). These forces are affecting the Mauritian workplace now namely the rise of China and emerging developing nations in global business.



Both public and private sector respondents were invited to assess their leaders within the global framework. In both contexts, public and private, leaders were prepared to face globalisation issues and placed them on their agenda with a majority favouring their knowledge of global threats. Since the private sector is more vulnerable to global forces, private leaders were expected to have more exposure to the global concept.

Respondents were asked to assess whether globalisation issues had their importance in union agendas. It was accepted that globalisation was better present in private union's agendas than in public sector agendas. Private jobs run higher the risk of becoming redundant and less predictable in Mauritius and this could be a reason why it was more obvious in private unions' agendas than public ones. If labour is now catching up with capital's long campaign of internationalisation (known as globalisation) then it may now be the turn of labour to become globalised (Munck, 2010).

Public and private sector employees were invited to provide suggestions to leaders regarding how they would set globalisation in their agendas. The most rated suggestions were the introduction of globalisation in unions' agendas coupled with a demand for job security. In globalisation, issues like privatisation were an essential feature as this could be affect security of employment for public officers. Job security could be associated with globalisation since jobs can now move across borders as this has been the case for outsourcing jobs to India by US multinationals in the IT sector.

One question asked respondents to state whether unions were pro-active or not with regards to globalisation. Respondents indicated that unions showed a positive attitude both from public and private unions. Fisher's exact test gave the  $p$ -value 0.72. This concluded that the findings were consistent with the sample size and that they were within acceptable limits. This view could be considered as strength within unions since they espoused the idea that globalisation was more an opportunity than a threat to them. It could be also added that since

globalisation is a well-anchored concept in employee relations, unions had little choice than to accept the concept more positively now than in the past.

In a question, respondents were asked to give their views regarding how they would regard globalisation in the future. This was an exercise to assess either anticipated pessimism or positivism regarding employees in a global economic order, already since 1995. The mean value was 2.07 and 2.14 respectively both for public and private sector employees. The Z-score -0.723 was within the acceptable limits of error and the null hypothesis was accepted. Consequently, no significant difference is found about the perception of employees regarding their organisation future through globalisation. Employees were quite positive regarding the future of their organisation in view of global forces with the perception that it should offer them more challenges and opportunities rather than threats and gloom. Munck (2010) claims that looking towards the future of unions one might posit a type of strategy with internationalism as its core philosophy.

The era of globalisation has created a novel and complex terrain for labour internationalism where local, regional and global levels interact and where community, consumption and production levels are all present (Munck, 2010).

### **Views of the panel of Expert Opinion on Globalisation**

All members of the panel of expert opinion gave their interpretation regarding the importance globalisation at work. The appropriate coding is also affixed.

#### **Chuttoo (2011)**

- Private unions had to give importance to the globalisation concept since it formed part of the union agendas in today's context. **(F)**
- Globalisation was an issue affecting unions from the outside and had the effect of creating capitalist and materialistic values at work. **(L)**
- Incidentally, globalisation had a negative effect on the workforce.

- Private unions had to accommodate global influences in them so as to keep pace with what was influencing the situation at work. **(F)**

**Imrith (2011)**

- Public unions shared the same view with private firms but globalisation tended to develop unique thoughts or directions (*pensée unique*).
- It was more geared towards the employers than the employees and created more opportunities for employers to take advantage of globalisation side-effects like privatisation of public bodies and the threat of permanent jobs in the public sector.

**Venkatasamy (2011)**

- Globalisation could not be viewed only from the worker perspective with more negative than positive thoughts.
- There should be a realistic view regarding globalisation since it had become today's dominant concept in business and there was no excuse to avoid it. **(F)**
- Employees had to be informed of the global issues while they should be aware that a developing economy like Mauritius had to depend on external forces. **(F)**
- The effects of globalisation affected the workforce but it was up to organisations to see how well they could cope with the situation. **(F) (L)**

**Saurty and Gunesh (2010)**

- Unions needed to play an active role in the globalisation process. **(L) (F)**
- Unions must have their strategies aligned with those of unions in different countries like unions existing in Europe. **(L)**
- Unions must be pro-active when they demonstrate against globalisation-related concepts like corporate privatisation and the change of public ownership into profit-oriented businesses where employees are more vulnerable to job losses and uncertainty.

### **Conclusive remarks on globalisation**

Globalisation should influence union agendas nowadays while those unions limited to the local context will be lagging behind. Its effects are far reaching and affect any nation in the world. Respondents in the survey have claimed that globalisation should be part of union agendas and that its influences will affect the future of unions. At the government level, many issues that affect employee relations concern the modernisation of work systems, the global economy, the need for competitiveness and productivity in the middle of an economic climate compelling local firms and authorities to comply with the globalisation concept.

Employee education on globalisation is a must since it will overcome bland perceptions that government or the employer is the only responsible party for the miseries of the employer like weak pay compared with high prices, low job security compared with the state's or the employer's intention to privatise work and develop the capitalist concept.

It is an accepted fact that society has become more capitalist oriented now and this is a global phenomenon. Unions will keep having their agendas based on socialist ideals, equity, justice for all, etc, but cannot consider globalisation just as a nightmare for them. They will have to accommodate global issues, accept that democracy and capitalism go hand in hand and will be a permanent feature in the years to come. It is imperative for unions to modernise and embrace globalisation. Although social justice and related issues will still be in union agendas, they will have to be framed within the globalisation context. There is no way out for unions in the contemporary context of employee relations.

### **Finding Five: Trade Unions may have to accommodate women and undertake an opportunity for more female involvement in today's unions**

The empowerment of union members has been raised among unions in the Mauritian workplace. The issue can be better focused on women who have minimal roles to play in unions and are not actively involved in union activities. In recent times, women's importance

has become important in employee relations where they have been discriminated but attempted to raise their voices against such malpractice. The findings in this section attempt to see how well women could be empowered to accede to better involvement at work.

Table 29

*Statistical Summary of Empowerment in Unions*

ITEM	Mean Value	Mean	Sample $\geq 30$
Sub-questions that supported the main assumption	Public	Value Private	Z-test score
16. <i>Encouragement of women to join unions</i>	2.49	3.00	-2.24
17. <i>Women's participation in unions</i>	2.34	2.54	1.07
18. <i>Effort done to accommodate women in unions</i>	0.227	Two-tailed test accepted.	

Respondents were asked to give their views regarding the effort that unions could themselves do to accommodate women in unions. The test's  $p$ -value was 0.227. Public unions were keener to say that there should be a feminine wing to accommodate women in unions so that they could have their due representation as members. Private sector employees followed a slightly different path where they preferred having them as co-opted members.

The Commission of the Status of Women (2010) acknowledged that women's economic empowerment is necessary for equitable and sustainable economic growth and development. Despite considerable progress on many aspects of women's economic

empowerment through education and employment, deeply entrenched gender inequality persists as a result of discriminatory norms and practices.

In a question, respondents were asked to state their views regarding the encouragement that women received to join unions. The mean value for public respondents was 2.49 and that of private respondents was 3.00. The calculated Z- score of -2.24 was beyond 1.96 and there was a significant difference between the two means, and the possibility of an error which might be a Type-I error. However, the F-test carried out gave a p-value that was above the minimum. Since the F-test minimised the importance of the error while the z score showed a difference, the null hypothesis was accepted. The variation was pronounced since public sector employees found the encouragement weak while private sector employees contrasted by stating that the encouragement was very strong.

The Commission of the Status of Women (2010) stated that strong measures are needed to eliminate stereotypical attitudes regarding the role of women and men in society, which limit women's participation in the labour market. The role of families in early gender socialization remains critical in the elimination of gender stereotypes. In addition, opportunities should be sought to enhance the role of the media in providing a more balanced and realistic portrayal of women, including in leadership positions.

### **The Benefits of Increased Female Empowerment on Unions**

A question aimed at finding out any advantage that employees could perceive from increased female membership in unions. Answers varied from the 98 respondents who participated in this survey. Popular responses were: The generation of more ideas on union agendas, the importance of having a feminine touch in contemporary unions, the commitment of women in union activities, civilised approach within employee relations, the benefit of etiquette from female collaboration, and so on.

Some answers also noted: The possibility of eliminating the chauvinist attitude in unions, the possibility of achieving better and balanced decisions through female involvement, the opportunity of benefiting from female attitudes like more tact and diplomacy in the bargaining approach.

### **Views of the panel of Expert opinion on female empowerment**

All members of the panel of expert opinion gave their interpretation regarding the importance female empowerment at work. The appropriate coding is also affixed.

#### **Chuttoo (2011)**

- The private sector federation had already empowered women. **(F)**
- The Confederation has made it a point to change its leadership every two years and make it more open for women to join senior positions.

#### **Imrith (2011)**

- The male-dominated perception existed in public unions although issues like female empowerment would be most welcome. **(F)**
  - Roles have been stereotyped in the public service while there have been very minimal changes regarding more pronounced female involvement in unions. **(F)**
- (L)**

#### **Venkatasamy (2011)**

- There has been some effort to better represent women in unions while their role might be still limited to secretarial positions.

#### **Saurty and Gunesh (2010)**

- Female membership in unions has increased over the years since women feel their importance in engaging themselves for a social cause.
- Inertia but also certain negative clichés from women organisations that has kept them distant from joining unions. **(F)**

- There was a consensus that the prominent role of women in society and their social advancement could be a positive step in bringing them to key positions in modern unions. **(F) (L)**

### **Conclusive remarks on female empowerment**

Although views can vary from the panel of expert opinion concerning better women empowerment in unions, certain views express that female empowerment is quite weak in Mauritian unions and the effort needs to be sustained. Rabearisoa (2009) explains that the trade union culture in Mauritius has always supported male leadership. There should be the need for female empowerment as 71% of the employees in the EPZ companies are composed of women. Additionally, women are prone to discriminations, seen from the inequality of wages, which varies from 8% in the EPZ companies to 20% for the executives.

A joint ILO/ICFTU report made certain recommendations regarding how women's representation in union leadership positions could be developed. These consisted of statutory reforms of unions to provide for women's representation like reserved seats, quotas, targets, proportionality, specific targets and plans such as equality plans, awareness raising and publicity, education and leadership training among others.

The gender issue has always been a barrier to the advancement of women in society. This also reflects their position in local unions in Mauritius. With less than 30% of female representation in the Legislative Assembly of Mauritius, the imbalance looks to be clear and this perception is also felt in key positions in the private sector where there is a glass ceiling for women to aspire to key positions.

The symbolic presence of women in certain union campaigns has gained credibility in a near past. This arose from the suspension of working women who had key positions in their unions and who also had major functions within their organisation. It is seen that their role and importance are getting valued as their popularity has made them become national



figures. This could be the case of a female union leader who was suspended from the national audio-visual corporation, MBC, since August 2010.

It can be concluded that there are positive arguments that favour female empowerment in unions and this could allow for more credibility of unionisation in the future. <sup>9</sup>Respondents have accepted that women's role cannot be minimised and that their due importance in unions will be a key issue for union survival in the middle of an environment still bound by scepticism and reluctance against women's pronounced participation.

**Finding Six: Having fewer but more efficeint unions might be necessary for trade unions to survive and bargain better in the existing employee relations' context**

The rationalisation of unions has been an issue of debate regarding their survival in the current employee climate. With over 350 unions representing the key sectors of the economy, it is difficult for unions to reach consensus but also a complex task for smaller unions to have their voices heard in important national forums. Chaumière (2010) called for fewer unions with more focused argumentations than too many unions that could develop negative synergy in the consultation process with the State.

Table 30

*Statistical Summary of few but efficient unions*

ITEM	Mean Value	Mean Value	Sample $\geq 30$
Sub-questions that supported the main assumption	Public	Private	Z-test score
<b>19. Fewer unions follow more focused</b>	3.26	3.04	1.34

<sup>9</sup> In relation to this argument, it is recently seen that government enforces wider empowerment of union in politics and this has been proven through a 2:1 ratio of men / women in municipal and rural elections in December 2012.

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*strategies*

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<b>20.</b> <i>Action undertaken to</i>	<i>p:0.844</i>	Accepted-Two-tailed test.
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*have fewer efficient unions*

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<b>21.</b> <i>Benefit of having fewer</i>	<i>p:0.5</i>	Accepted- Two-tailed test.
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*but more efficient unions*

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A statistical test was set out to assess whether or not rationalised unions tended to follow more focused strategies. The mean values were 3.26 and 3.04 respectively for public and private unions. There was good consensus from both unions to explain that fewer unions led to more concrete outcomes. In sectoral agreements, it was seen that few unions could bring about better resolutions than larger ones. A few private sector unions like the Private Sector Textile Union or the FTSP were capable of handling effectively issues related to employee safety and reduction of accidents and hazards at work.

### **Two-tailed Tests**

Normal distribution two-tailed tests were also used to test certain assumptions affecting the rationalisation of trade unions. A question related to the action that could be undertaken to rationalise large number of unions. The main arguments were to merge unions in the same industry and to enforce single unions in the same industry. The merger of unions could help to increase the number of members and have better representation in collective bargaining. The *p*-value was 0.844 and this confirmed the validity of the two-tailed test. The fairly high probability value confirmed that unions had to be merged in the same industry as there were more than a single union representing the same interests of the worker.

Respondents were assessed against the benefits of union rationalisation. The two-tailed test probabilities gave the *p*-value of 0.5. The fairly high probability value was an indication that unions operate with more efficiency when they become rationalised. The idea was also well supported by the option that decisions could be speeded up with fewer unions. Respondents

from the public sector also largely supported the fact that consensus could be more easily reached while the same option was differently interpreted by private sector employees.

Hannigan (2013) stated that there would be an inevitable requirement for trade union organisational structures to respond to and match changing public policy objectives. This is likely to focus on the separate organisations that represent broadly similar categories across the overall public service.

### **The importance of Federations**

Arrowsmith (2004) states that union merger activity is largely a defensive strategy in a context of overall decline. The rationalisation of unions aligns with the concept of federations of unions. There are confederations and larger unions representing both private and public sectors and some that represent all workers at the national level like the National Tripartite Forum and earlier the National Trade Union Confederation. Larger unions come to prominence at critical stages of a country's economy and when agendas are "hot" like inflation, unemployment and the loss of purchasing power. Sometimes, smaller unions may have their individual agendas while it is common to see employees willing to move to federations. The big unions see mergers as a way of boosting membership and resources, whilst the smaller ones are often attracted by better financial security (Arrowsmith, 2004). Federations may not last for long depending upon what they called to deal about. The mergers primarily aim to consolidate forces in particular sectors of economic activity and to avoid wasting resources in mutual rivalries (Jokivuori, 2009). Once their agenda is over, they may have a less important role. Unions within the organisation may pursue their individual agendas and be more responsive to the needs of their members.

### **Views of the panel of expert opinion on having fewer but efficient Unions**

All members of the panel of expert opinion gave their interpretation regarding fewer but efficient unions at work. The appropriate coding is also affixed.

**Chuttoo (2011)**

- Having fewer unions was essential in today's context. **(F) (L)**
- It would be fair to have the views of different leaders from independent unions to address key issues.
- Having fewer unions was a subject with nuances but should not be a deterrent to eliminating unions.

**Imrith (2011)**

- Few but efficient Unions was a good intention but could not be viewed as a necessity.
- Employers might be happier with fewer unions and lesser problems to cope. **(L)**
- A federation of unions would bring several independent unions together and better address their problems. **(F) (L)**

**Venkatasamy (2011)**

- There has been some effort to better represent women in unions while their role might be still limited to secretarial positions.

**Saurty and Gunesh (2010)**

- Fewer but efficient unions were important especially when unions are created very freely with a minimum number of members; seven in the Mauritian context.

One common view was also widely shared by all other members of the panel.

Usually, new unions are subgroups stemming from the mainstream union with a view to pursuing independent ideals. Though, it is good for unions to have individual agendas, too many unions in the same sector have lesser power than a confederation of unions.

**Conclusive remarks on fewer but efficient unions**

The rationalisation of unions in Mauritius is a topic of importance when it concerns the future of unions. Government, under the Pay Research Bureau, has called for higher

employee unionisation while it is a known fact that less than 20% of private sector employees are unionised and this creates an imbalance of union power where public employees are better represented than their private counterparts. At the same time, some Ministers of Labour have felt that too many unions (more than 350) existed locally to serve a labour market of 500,000 employees.

This declaration called the researcher to consider union rationalisation as a variable for trade union strategy in a modern context. It is believed that in an environment influenced by technological innovation and breakthrough coupled with more sophisticated compensation systems, unionisation might not be valid in the future and the golden days of revolution are gone.

Having fewer unions is necessary to ensure that agendas are convergent and represent a certain bargaining issue vis-à-vis employers. Too many single arguments weaken union power and disallow the emergence of effective union agendas and leaders. Confederations of unions have proved that when unions unite, the voices are better heard. The perception was widely shared by respondents in the research.

In recent times, however, non-unionised employees of the private sector had their voices better heard with high level of appreciation from the media implying that modern ways of bargaining exist. With or without unions remains a debatable issue but streamlining unions gives more credibility to unions in Mauritius.

### **Devising a model**

To conclude this research, it would be useful to take all the variables and develop a model which will reflect the findings of the survey as well as how the different topics are interdependent.

The thesis displayed seven key variables that would accurately portray trade union strategies in today's climate. The model would therefore support the arguments and even positively forecast what would be the likely scenario for trade unions in the future.

### **Certain Assumptions**

**The future of Trade Unions.** The panel of expert opinion broadly suggested that trade unions would survive in the future because they were an accepted phenomenon of the Mauritian society and that their presence is widely felt in society through the media in particular the independent press which portrays unions as a third power besides government and the opposition party in the socio-political arena. Trade unions may have some political agenda, usually leftist in Mauritius but maintain their neutrality against the two major parties.

Trade unions will therefore exist for an undetermined period despite the fact that their membership may decline or the younger generation has lesser incline of trade unionism and its influence upon them.

**Globalisation.** Globalisation was considered as a variable in the research where trade unions had to abide by the concept. The research findings supported the fact that globalisation had a pervasive effect on unions and will henceforth continue influencing any type of union organisation in Mauritius given that it encompasses most of the external environment or the so-called macroeconomic factors. Globalisation will persist in influencing union strategies for a long period while in the past, its influence was considered as limitative with a higher level of internally-oriented unions.

**The research scope.** Another useful assumption could be the research scope. With a limited number of respondents, nearly 100, the research may not accurately give a formulation which is perfectly applicable to Mauritius. However much the sample has been effectively designed to ensure a well debated survey, it has been conducted with respondents have sufficient intellectual maturity to be able to answer some seventy-five questions of

demanding intellectual ability. These questions could not be asked to the mass of semi-skilled labour still predominant in certain sectors of the economy like the sugar and the textile sector. Despite such limitation, the findings had a certain degree of convergence seen from the results that were obtained. Though limited, the data was sufficient to use for analysis and model formulation.

**The time factor.** Time factor would be another good assumption in model formulation. At the present time, taking into consideration influences of the market, labour dynamics and socio-economic forces, the model stands good. There has been a period of chronic depression worldwide and this has affected a market economy like Mauritius which is much dependent upon influences from the western nations upon which are its main customers.

There might also be some time when the variables will change like an improvement of economic condition or shorter cycles of economic recovery or depression. The research has not taken the time factor into account assuming that today's changes might not vary too much in the future.

**Industrial democracy and government.** To perpetuate the tradition of having trade unions in society, industrial democracy<sup>10</sup> is a must. Unions flourish when government encourages the participation and development of all actors of society and weaken if democracy is threatened like the implementation of the Industrial Relations Act 1973 (IRA) imposed as a measure to limit union freedom in the heydays of militancy and socialism of the seventies. Today unions have flourished because the Act itself stipulates that more employees need to be unionised. The ERA intends to open up more opportunities for employees, in particular those in the private sector, to become unionised. Employers have

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<sup>10</sup> Industrial democracy is viewed in terms of broader participation of employees at work particularly in decision-making, participation, delegation and limits of employee freedom.

not so far heard this view although employee relations tend to become tense when workers are retrenched, as this has been the case for employees in sectors like hotel and catering, and the construction and services sector recently (Week-End, 2013).

### **The Variables**

The research variables were as follows:

-Innovation, Bargaining power of union leaders, Social Partnership, Globalisation, Empowerment and Rationalisation of Unions.

### **Strength of each Variable**

**Innovation.** Both public and private respondents held strong views regarding innovation especially through the use of modern communication techniques and strategies like change. Even the panel of expert opinion offered the same congruence regarding innovation. Mean values were between 1.5 and 2.5

**Bargaining power of union leaders.** Collective bargaining is now enforceable under the Employment Relations Act 2008 and will influence trade union strategies now and in the future. Collective bargaining will determine whether unions will be powerful or not within the employee relations climate but they are dependent upon leaders. There is a link between collective bargaining and leadership. Respondents' mean values ranged again between 1.5 and 2.5 supporting its strength of the argument.

**Social partnership.** Respondents positively viewed this theme. The value of arguments in favour of genuine partnership was quite strong with the belief that true partnership enhances the role and influence of unions. The panel had reservation regarding this argument usually contesting whether it was truly applicable. The reasoning of respondents is applicable here since they answered more structured questions with strong mean values greater than 2.5.



Barber B<sup>11</sup> (2003) confirms that a key issue in partnership organisations is the increasing role that unions play in delivering skills and training and this is perhaps the biggest and least recognised development in modern trade unionism.

**Globalisation.** This is a theme, as mentioned earlier, which will influence trade unions now and in the future. If its importance barely influenced trade unions in the past, it will be a feature that cannot be eliminated or altered unless a new business paradigm comes forward in the next decade. Respondents and the panel of expert opinion held both positive and negative views of globalisation. The mean values were above 2.5 and correlation strength regarding *p*-values was between fair and strong.

**Female Empowerment.** The empowerment of women in unions was positively viewed by respondents. In the survey, they agreed that giving more opportunities to women could be an element that could revitalise unions. In society, women were poorly represented in higher spheres of life and this could be a positive step to give unions more visibility in their effort to represent all types of employees. Mean values were reasonable like above 2.0 and two-tailed tests mostly gave positive *p*-values.

**Few but efficient unions.** The respondents positively viewed having few but efficient unions. The mean values obtained in the survey exceeded 3 implying the high strength of this variable. The view was equally well shared by the panel of expert opinion, which commented on the benefit of having fewer, and more focused unions while maintaining that there could sometimes be the risk of having fewer voices. Confederations of unions could represent the unions in a more effective way.

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<sup>11</sup> Barber's speech delivered at the Trade Union Confederation Conference in the UK elaborates issues regarding the changing role of unions in the future and certain comparisons with the glorious part of unionisation in the UK. The author finds very common similitude with the contemporary situation in Mauritius.

### **The development of a model**

After assessing the different valences, the researcher has deemed it appropriate to develop a model to conclude the thesis. The model is algebraic in concept as it stems from descriptive research which is more direct and simplistic than experimental research which could involve complex formulation like in econometrics. The model sums up the research and allows any reader to understand how the different factors contribute to understanding the central theme which focused on the future of trade unions.

### **The research model**

Following the arguments discussed earlier and the values computed for each of the seven topics, a suitable model that compounds the union strategies is defined below:

### **Research model**

$$f = \sum [\alpha i + \beta l + \gamma s + \delta g + \epsilon e + \theta r] t$$

The devising of the research reads as follows:

**f** = future orientation of trade unions

**i** = the innovation factor

**l** = the leadership factor in bargaining

**s** = the social partnership factor

**g** = the globalisation factor

**e** = the empowerment factor

**r** = the factor regarding fewer and more efficient unions

**t** = the time factor

For each factor, valences are provided like  $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$ ,  $\gamma$ ,  $\delta$ ,  $\Sigma$ ,  $\theta$ , etc. to explain the relative strength of each valence. Each valence is different because the values obtained are not identical for each factor.

It is noted that all the factors are compounded and not added here since research considered each of them to be dependent and the mean values were quite close. Also, the compounded formula is more professionally acceptable than additions which can state factors may be included and removed at any time.

### **Interpretation and Justification**

The future of trade unions is dependent on all the six factors discussed throughout the research. The higher each factor is rated, the more likely will trade unions survive in the future. For example, the more trade unions innovate, the more trade empower women, the more trade unions have better leaders, etc. means that they will survive better in the future.

Comparatively, if the valences are weakened, like lesser innovation (low  $\alpha$  value for innovation), lesser social partnership (low  $\delta$  value for partnership), and weaker concern for globalisation and so on, the less likely will trade unions survive and the more likely they will disappear or become obsolete.

Next, if some valences are strong and some valences are weak, trade unions will survive but remain *less* dynamic like little innovation and strong partnership, weak forms of bipartite and high concern for globalisation. This calls once again for the strength of each valence to ensure the success of unions.

**t** as the time factor is also a determinant in the equation. Time is a factor which cannot be dissociated since time can be predictable in the short term but the future which is also time bound cannot be accurately projected. For example, what happens if society rejects unions a century later? The time factor cannot be considered as infinite, it is rather scaled over a defined or limited period.

The research model could also be interpreted as:

$$\Delta f / \Delta t = \Sigma [\alpha i + \beta l + \gamma s + \delta g + \epsilon e + \theta r] \text{ and hence}$$

$$\Delta f = [\alpha i + \beta l + \gamma s + \delta g + \epsilon e + \theta r] \Delta t$$

In this case, the  $\Delta$  factor explains the variance of trade union evolution as a result of time. Therefore, the researcher claims the model to be a relevant one in today's context.

### The Value of Valences

From the formula presented in this dissertation, it was also important to find out the value of the valences  $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$ ,  $\gamma$ ,  $\delta$ ,  $\epsilon$  and  $\theta$  related to the six factors mentioned like innovation, leadership, social partnership, globalisation, empowerment and fewer and more efficient unions.

The table below summarises the different mean values that were calculated in the research and that were associated to the calculation of the valences.  $p$ -values and other data are not included here in order to simplify data assessment.

Table 31:

#### *Calculation of Valences*

ITEM	Mean	Mean Value	Cumulated	Smoothing
Innovation- <i>i</i>	Value	Private	Mean*	Constant
	Public [1]	[2]	[3]	value*[4]
<i>Communicating with new techniques</i>	1.68	1.59		
<i>Benefits of Innovative Communications</i>	2.45	2.07	<b>1.94</b>	$\alpha = \mathbf{0.13}$

Leadership- <i>l</i>				
<i>Bargaining tactics of union</i>	2.18	2.29		
<i>Union intervention in bargaining</i>	2.15	2.36		
<i>Evaluation of leaders</i>	2.27	2.14		
<i>Importance of collective bargaining</i>	2.53	2.50	<b>2.30</b>	$\beta = 0.15$
Social Partnership-s				
<i>Relations between employers and employees in social partnership</i>	2.45	2.46		
<i>Relating social partnership to co-operation</i>	3.00	2.79		
<i>Extent of union involvement in social partnership</i>	3.03	3.04	<b>2.79</b>	$\gamma = 0.19$
Globalisation-g				
<i>Globalisation and organisation future</i>	2.07	2.14	<b>2.10</b>	$\delta = 0.14$
Female Empowerment-f				
<i>Encouragement of women to join unions</i>	2.49	3.00		
<i>Women's participation in unions</i>	2.34	2.54	<b>2.67</b>	$\varepsilon = 0.18$
Fewer but more efficient unions-r				
<i>Fewer unions follow more focused strategies</i>	3.26	3.04	<b>3.15</b>	$\theta = 0.21$

## Methodology

The mean values found in the calculation of data per research area are displayed in the table above. The means were initially evaluated by adding means per row and then creating a moving average. In the first case, the mean per row was 1.63 and 2.26 respectively. The means were again evaluated and the total average (moving) was 1.94. This exercise was repeated for all the key research factors analysed and the cumulated average was placed at the lower end of each variable (Column 3).

The values of the valences were then summed providing a total value of 14.95. Each cumulated mean was then scaled to 100% e.g. In the first situation,  $\alpha$  value for innovation was calculated as  $1.94/14.95 \times 100 = 0.13$ . The exercise was repeated for all the remaining cumulated frequencies. The valences summed up to 1 when all of them were added revealing a smoothing constant (column 4) for each variable. The smoothing constant serves as a suitable indicator for a more accurate future prediction.

It could be concluded here that the different  $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$  and other values reflected the strength of each variable. For example, the larger the constant, the stronger was the valence. In the study, *fewer and more efficient unions* along with *female empowerment* and *social partnership* were the most powerful influencers of union future in Mauritius.

The limitation of this calculated figure might come from the findings dating back to 2010 and the small scale of respondents (100). This is not a national survey but at least highlights the strength and importance that must be given to each of the selected factors mentioned and scientifically calculated in this research.

The final calculated model would stand as:

$$\Delta f / \Delta t = \Sigma [0.13i + 0.15l + 0.19s + 0.14g + 0.18e + 0.21r]$$

And hence

$$\Delta f = [0.13i + 0.15l + 0.19s + 0.14g + 0.18e + 0.21r] \Delta t$$

### **End notes**

The research ends at this stage following coverage of all the key steps starting from the formulation of the problem, the literature review, primary research and culminating into the analysis of findings and recommendations. It covered both public and private unions in Mauritius in selected fields and allowed for both mathematical and observational analysis. This research ended in the development of a model limited to the research context but which offers to potential researchers the opportunity to view variables affecting unionisation in a country. There might be opportunities to conduct research in other environments for future researchers. The research is considered as authentic and original and remains both the property of the researcher and that of SMC University.

A few statements conclude this report. Barber (2003) states that a free and democratic society needs to be pluralist. There must be a voice for everyone, not just the rich, the privileged and the powerful. The relationship between employer and employed is inherently unbalanced. Trade unions give that opportunity for employees to speak collectively, to pool their limited power in order to bring some balance to the employment relationship and to tackle these deep-rooted inequalities.

Wilfred Rogers, first President of the Labour Representation Committee in 1894 puts it this way, "There must be an independent life within the state to prevent Government becoming tyranny and the trade unions will be chief among those who call that independent life into being."

Hantke (2009) states that, a dramatic change of the working environment and the employment conditions has taken place. The organisational structure of the trade unions shall

be put on the test stand here in order to find ways, together with the relevant actors, to meet the “old” trade unions’ objectives in the future. There is no patent medicine for the renewal and adoption processes. The country specific framework conditions of the transition states rather call for individual solutions that are, however, founded on the principle tasks of the unions. There does not exist a model which can be imported from outside (Hantke, 2009). However, the courage and the creativity of “outsiders” can help to ensure the success of the unions’ future.



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## **Appendix I: Questionnaire**

1. Does your union communicate with you using electronic communication?

☐Never ☐Sometimes ☐Very often

2. Do you think that your trade union should use new techniques to communicate with you?

☐Yes ☐No

3. How do you think that innovative communications technology will assist you in getting the services from your union?

☐Very little ☐To some extent ☐Very much

4. How would you rate the following innovations? *Select in order of preference 1-4*

☐ Decentralised decisions ☐ Change management ☐ e-technology ☐ empowerment of employees

5(a). How would you rate the bargaining tactics of your union leader?

☐ Poor ☐ Average ☐ Fairly Good ☐ Excellent

5(b). How would you rate the bargaining tactics of your union?

☐ Poor ☐ Average ☐ Fairly Good ☐ Excellent

6. How would you rate union intervention in bargaining?

☐ Poor ☐ Average ☐ Good ☐ Excellent

7. How would you evaluate your leaders in the bargaining process?

☐ Poor ☐ Average ☐ Good ☐ Excellent

8. Do you think that collective bargaining is important in your union?

☐ Not at all ☐ A little Important ☐ Important ☐ Very important

9. What are the qualities that you would like to have from your union leader or representative?

10. How do you rate relations between you and your employer?

☐ Poor ☐ Average ☐ Good ☐ Excellent

11. Do you think that social partnership will increase cooperation between management and employees?

☐ Not at all ☐ A little ☐ Fairly ☐ Very much



12. How far would you or your union like to be involved in social partnership?

☐ Not at all ☐ A little ☐ Fairly ☐ Very much

13. Do you think that the global environment affects the activities of trade unions? (Yes/No)

14. If Yes, how?

☐ Globalisation lessens the importance of trade unions ☐ Globalisation makes trade unions more vulnerable ☐ Globalisation enforces trade unions to modernise ☐ Globalisation renders trade unions obsolete

15. What are the global forces affecting trade unions?

☐ Greater need for privatisation ☐ Loss or the threat of losing jobs ☐ Intense competition ☐

Lower level of stability

16. Do you think that women are encouraged to join your union?

☐ Not at all ☐ A little ☐ Fairly well ☐ Very well

17. How do women participate in your union?

☐ Not at all ☐ A little ☐ Fairly well ☐ Very well

18. What effort can be made to accommodate women in trade unions?

☐ Offer them more responsible positions ☐ Increase female membership in unions

☐ Deliberately offer them key positions to create a balance between both sexes in unions

(Select in order of preference)

19. Trade unions should be reduced in quantity to focus on quality and efficiency. How far do you agree with this statement?

20. What can be done to have fewer but more efficient unions?

21. What are the benefits having fewer but more efficient unions?

## Appendix II: Questionnaire Findings

1. Does your union communicate with you using electronic communication?

### Public Organisations-A

	Respondents	Percentage
<b>Never</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Very Often</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>23</b>

### Private Organisations-B

	Respondents	Percentage
<b>Never</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Very Often</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>

2. Do you think that your trade union should use new techniques to communicate with you?

### Public Organisations: A

	Respondents	Percentage
<b>Yes- Interested in new techniques</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>No- Not Interested in new techniques</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>18</b>

### Private Organisations: B

	Respondents	Percentage
<b>Yes- Interested in new techniques</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>90</b>
<b>No- Not Interested in new techniques</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>10</b>

3. How do you think that innovative communications technology will assist you in getting the services from your union?

☐Very little ☐To some extent ☐Very much

### Public Organisations-A:

	Respondents	Percentage
<b>Very little</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>To some extent</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Very much</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>52</b>

### Private Organisations-B:

	Respondents	Percentage
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<b>Very little</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>To some extent</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Very much</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>35</b>

4. How would you rate the following innovations? *Select in order of preference 1-4*

☐ Decentralised decisions ☐ Change management ☐ e-technology ☐ empowerment of employees

Public Organisations -A:

<b>OPTION RATING</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Decentralised decisions</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Change management</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>e-technology</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Empowerment of employees</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>

Private Organisations-B

<b>OPTION RATING</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Decentralised decisions</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Change management</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>e-technology</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Empowerment of employees</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>

5(a). How would you rate the bargaining tactics of your union leader?

☐ Poor ☐ Average ☐ Fairly Good ☐ Excellent

Public Organisations-A:

	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Poor</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Average</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Quite Good</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>Excellent</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

Private Organisations-B:

	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Poor</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Average</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Fairly Good</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Excellent</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>

5(b). How would you rate the bargaining tactics of your union?

☐ Poor ☐ Average ☐ Good ☐ Excellent

Public Organisations -A

	Respondents	Percentage
<b>Poor</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Average</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Good</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Excellent</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>

Private Organisations B

	Respondents	Percentage
<b>Poor</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Average</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Good</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Excellent</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>

6. How would you rate union intervention in bargaining?

☐ Poor ☐ Average ☐ Good ☐ Excellent

Public Organisations -A

	Respondents	Percentage
<b>Poor</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Average</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Good</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Excellent</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>

Private Organisations -B

	Respondents	Percentage
<b>Poor</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Average</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Good</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Excellent</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>

7. How would you evaluate your leaders in the bargaining process?

Public Organisations-A

	Respondents	Percentage
<b>Poor</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Average</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>30</b>

<b>Good</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Excellent</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>

Private Organisations-B

	Respondents	Percentage
<b>Poor</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Average</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Good</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Excellent</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

8. Do you think that collective bargaining is important in your union?

☐ Not at all ☐ A little Important ☐ Important ☐ Very important

Public Organisations-A:

	Respondents	Percentage
<b>Not at all</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>A little Important</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Very Important</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>53</b>

Private Organisations –B

	Respondents	Percentage
<b>Not at all</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>A little Important</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Very Important</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>50</b>

9. What are the qualities that you would like to have from your union leader or representative?

Respondents, in this last question were asked to mention the qualities that they would expect from their union leader or representative. The main finding was that the leader should be an *honest* and *trustworthy* individual not willing to serve his/her personal interest. There was the mention of transactional leadership with the objective of getting results since union representatives are appointed to represent their unions and differ, in this sense, from a team leader. Responses also mentioned the following: *knowledgeable person, dynamic and extrovert, active listener, collaborative, pro-active, inspirational, passionate, unbiased*, and so on.

10. How do you rate relations between you and your employer?

☐ Poor ☐ Average ☐ Good ☐ Excellent

Public Organisations -A

	Respondents	Percentage
<b>Poor</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Average</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Good</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>Excellent</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

Private Organisations-B

	Respondents	Percentage
<b>Poor</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Average</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Good</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Excellent</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>11</b>

11. Do you think that social partnership will increase cooperation between management and employees?

Public Organisations -A

	Respondents	Percentage
<b>Not at all</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>A little</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Fairly</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Very much</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>33</b>

Private Organisations -B

	Respondents	Percentage
<b>Not at all</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>A little</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Fairly</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Very much</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>21</b>

12. How far would you or your union like to be involved in social partnership?

☐ Not at all ☐ A little ☐ Fairly ☐ Very much

Public Organisations-A

	Respondents	Percentage
<b>Not at all</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>A little</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Fairly</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>48</b>

<b>Very much</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>30</b>
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Private Organisations –B

	Respondents	Percentage
<b>Not at all</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>A little</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Fairly</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Very much</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>29</b>

13. Do you think that the global environment affects the activities of trade unions? (Yes/No)

14. If Yes, how?

	Public	Private
<b>Lessens the importance of trade unions</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Makes trade unions more vulnerable</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Enforces trade unions to modernise</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Renders trade unions obsolete</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>2</b>

15. What are the global forces affecting trade unions?

	Public	Private
<b>Greater need for privatisation</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Loss or the threat of losing jobs</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Intense competition</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Lower level of stability</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>2</b>

16. Do you think that women are encouraged to join your union?

☐ Not at all ☐ A little ☐ Fairly well ☐ Very well

Public Organisations-A

	Respondents	Percentage
<b>Not at all</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>A little</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Fairly well</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Very well</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>17</b>

Private Organisations-B

	Respondents	Percentage
Not at all	2	7
A little	9	32
Fairly well	4	14
Very well	13	47

17. How do women participate in your union?

Public Organisations-A

	Respondents	Percentage
Not at all	7	10
A little	41	59
Fairly well	13	18
Very well	9	13

Private Organisations-B

	Respondents	Percentage
Not at all	2	7
A little	13	47
Fairly well	9	32
Very well	4	14

18. What effort can be made to accommodate women in trade unions?

Public Organisations -A

OPTION	▶ RATING	1	2	3
Offer them more responsible positions		45	42	4
Increase female membership in unions		69	12	15
Deliberately offer them key positions to create a balance between both sexes in unions		48	12	15

Private Organisations -B

OPTION	▶ RATING	1	2	3
Offer them more responsible positions		42	14	1
Increase female membership in unions		15	4	3
Deliberately offer them key positions to		18	2	6



**create a balance between both sexes in unions**

19. Trade unions should be reduced in quantity to focus on quality and efficiency. How far do you agree with this statement?

Public Organisations-A

	Respondents	Percentage
<b>Totally disagree</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Disagree a little</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Agree a little</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Totally agree</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>47</b>

Private Organisations-B

	Respondents	Percentage
<b>Totally disagree</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Disagree a little</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Agree a little</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Totally agree</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>36</b>

20. What can be done to have fewer but more efficient unions?

	Public	Private
<b>Merge unions in the same industry</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Eliminate small Unions</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Enforce single unions in a company</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>9</b>

21. What are the benefits of having fewer but more efficient?

	Public	Private
<b>Unions can be better focused</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Unions operate with more efficiency</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Unions can achieve more consensus</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Union decisions can be speeded up</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>10</b>

### **Appendix III-Articles related to research area**

#### **AIII-1-Author's Article in newspaper-Le Mauricien (October 2010)**

##### **Social Partners in the current Employee Relations context**

Prior to the proclamation of the Employment Relations Act 2008, spokespersons from the private sector emphasised both the need for bipartite and social partnership in the new employee relations context characterised by subtle changes like collective bargaining and the recognition of new forms of unionisation in sectors like prisons and fire services. The bipartite concept was immediately repealed when the new Minister of Labour and Industrial Relations took seat on June 2010 and proclaimed that the tripartite system would be reinstated in its traditional format.

The tripartite system offers the advantage of including the government in collective bargaining which normally allows employers and employees to discuss key issues relating to employee relations. Trade unionists favour the presence of the government in negotiation rounds believing that state intervention creates some balance between the two existing parties at work.

The bipartite agreement was favoured by the private sector whereby only employers and employees would be involved in collective bargaining without the need for state intervention. In such a condition, time spent on discussion about workplace issues would be reduced as there would be face-to-face interaction between employers and employees. In a general sense, unions would be disallowed in the bipartite system although their absence is not explicitly mentioned.

At this stage, Mauritius has rejected the bipartite agreement in favour of the traditional tripartite for the forthcoming budget 2011 which solicits the intervention of unions as well as any other party willing to be involved in negotiations. Unions are expecting that the government can offer compensation of Rs 1000 and above in comparison with the loss of

purchasing power of consumers in the recent months. From their personal survey, unions state that the average spending per consumer has increased by Rs 1500 in the last quarter and this significantly affects his standard of living. Employers are expected to address positively this issue, according to union leaders.

### **The Relevance of Social Partnership**

If the tripartite system maintains its tempo in the current employee relations climate, it is also important to consider or review the importance of social partnership. The sad reality is that concepts regarding collective bargaining are generalised locally through the belief that it is always necessary to have state intervention. The problem arises from the perception that compensation would not be rightly given if employers were the sole deciders of reward.

If government employees benefit from the golden opportunity of being unionised (more than 50% in the white-collar sector), this is not the case for private employees where less than 25% of employees are unionised and they are sparsely represented in manufacturing sectors and the emblematic white-collar banking and aviation sectors. In new sectors, union representation is minimal and even inexistent.

Private sector employers might have claimed the importance of social partnership by vaguely using the term “partenaire” in various discussions without clearly specifying how this is workable. Accordingly, employees view themselves as mere puppets in collective bargaining and that every decision is firmly decided by the employers.

This state of things might be true in some private organisations which are small, poorly-structured and family-oriented. However, it is correct to say that social partnership can work out well in the private sector where companies have developed into well-defined conglomerates.

### **How Social Partnership works**

The basic argument for social partnership in Mauritius is how it can really work. Will it be just a meeting between employee representatives and employers or an enlarged commitment of both partners? Apparently, the second option looks plausible and workable.

In this situation, employers should firstly allow for employee representation in the private sector. This can come from democratic representation of employees who can elect or delegate some effective representatives from their side. Such people can come from various departments of the private company and be trained in employee relations. It is up to employers to develop awareness of employee relations and rights wherever applicable. In doing so, employees can understand that they have a positive role to play in their company while they recognise their basic rights in collective bargaining and workplace democracy.

This change in attitude obviously requires open communication from both parties without hidden agendas. Unionisation is particularly weak in Mauritius because employees believe that it is not of their concern to know about their rights and that all decisions are vetoed by employers. Apparently, this perception is misleading and needs to be corrected.

The second step would be to develop agendas for discussion. Employees can say that compensation is their major concern regarding their loss of purchasing power. This is not enough as a key issue as many other accompanying issues fit well into the agenda of social partnership. For example, restructuring, privatisation, merger, company closure or change in ownership are very important issues that affect both employers and employees. Just hiding such reality in open discussions and social partnership platforms is bad and, at times, dangerous for workplace democracy.

The third issue would be open debate and discussion. Social partnership should allow room for such opportunity to develop and present useful arguments. Some can be sensible and hard to tackle but still they can open up the way for effective relations.

### **The Essence of Social Partnership**

The essence of social partnership remains in the exchange of views in a constructive way although heated debate and tough negotiations are needed at times. In no part of the world, negotiations and social partnerships have remained stable like dormant water. Rather, this calm water metaphor can hide more trouble later. Therefore, discussions need to be developed with arguments from both sides prior to reaching consensus.

Consensus is then part of the “win-win” situation at the closing of the social partnership debate. Such a condition cannot be imposed just when social partners are starting their discussion. This can only be achieved through repeated negotiations and open dialogue. Avoidance of debate and imposing a decision cannot be a feature of social partnership.

Consequently social partnership develops debate around everything affecting the employee. It can be compensation as well as the future orientation of the company. It should not be an attempt to “buy” unions or employee representatives by hiding the reality and showing only favourable intentions from the employer.

### **An Extended Social Partnership**

As a conclusion, given that the bipartite is no more a reality in Mauritius; social partnership needs to be developed in a structured way. This favours employees to interact and assess the prevailing economic situation. It also paves the way for participation between employers and employees while it announces good partnership, not only in the short-term but in the long run.

Some private companies owe their long-term existence to the fruitful partnership between employers, employees and society. This is already a good example of extended social partnership but this still remains limited to a few organisations espousing human relations more than human resource management. In the end, it pays to build up social

partnership in Mauritius especially in the private sector as a starting point for modern employee relations.

Nirmal Kumar BETCHOO

### **AIII-2-Author's related article in newspaper- L'Express**

#### **Labour Day, beyond the symbol-April 2006**

In 2006, the celebration of Labour Day raises questions concerning the precarious nature of trade unionism, the weakening of collective bargaining in Mauritius influenced by new formulas proposed by the employers as well as increasing tension and disagreement among trade union federations.

Labour Day celebrated on the 1st of May retains its symbol regarding the importance of the worker in the job environment. In the form of rhetoric, it is time and again voiced that workers are the firm's asset and represent the most important linkage within the work process. Celebrated first in 1949, following the fight of Guy Rozemont to dedicate a holiday to labourers and artisans on sugar estates, Labour Day is considered as a symbolic day for reflection on the fate of the employee in the future. In his motion, Guy Rozemont stated, "This Council is of opinion that the 1st May be considered a public holiday to allow the workers of this colony to have a day's rest to celebrate labour ideals."

Over the years, Labour Day has been better associated with important crowd gatherings at political meeting, especially during pre-electoral campaigns. Trade unions have voiced their disagreement upon this trend since they had to content themselves with sparsely seated members in their traditional assemblies. The present situation in Mauritius raises arguments relating to the precarious nature of trade unionism.

Trade unions no more enjoy the popularity and credibility that they were entitled to during the first half of the last century, including the 1970s symbolised by the pervasive influence of militancy known as 'années de braise'. Efforts to weaken trade union influence

have been recently witnessed. At times, leaders have stated that the modern era of industrial relations does not easily accommodate collective bargaining. The fact is that an industrial environment favours activities on a three-tier day where work interruptions and go-slows undermine the country's economical activity.

Employee affiliation to trade unions has decreased with a fairly low level of unionisation at the workplace. New jobs that require more intellectual and less labour-intensive ones easily call for a low level of unionisation. This concept is viewed as 'l'affaire des autres' and is better associated with the restlessness of trade unions with their work-related problems. Incidentally, industrial unions have weakened while white-collar unions under the umbrella of the Front Syndical du Service Civil (FSSC) have increased. This is attributed to the closed shop's nature of such jobs.

### **The Weakening of Collective Bargaining**

Collective bargaining remains the most vibrant aspect of workplace democracy. Employers have felt that this undermines work performance and puts undue pressure on remuneration. Over the years and especially in this millennium, employers in Mauritius have found it necessary to reinvent bargaining processes. They state that the present bargaining situation is counterproductive in that it does not impact on productivity and ignites the demand spiral where the vicious circle of increasing production costs and salaries hide the real problem of sustaining productivity.

This year, the traditional collective bargaining seems to give way to a new reward mechanism based on company gains and productivity. Employers had earlier forwarded this attitude and it rarely met with concrete solutions. Under this system, the more productive workers will be better remunerated leaving lesser room for inefficiency and complacency.

Though the whole country favours a situation where compensation and employee relations are viewed in a holistic way, little can be said of the declining power of trade

unionism and the weakening of collective bargaining. History has revealed that workplace democracy should be maintained as a pillar of democracy. This has been evidenced in prominent works including contributions of Emile Zola (*Germinal*), George Orwell (*Animal Farm*) and proponents of a classless society, following May 1968 in France and the early seventies in Mauritius, to date a utopia.

### **Tension among Trade Union Federations**

Leadership crisis in trade unions is another illustration that calls for reflection. The actual context illustrates a high level of disagreement between trade union leaders where leadership takes a severe blow. It is a normal course of history to evidence leadership crisis in the storming phase that group formation undergoes. Unfortunately, the greater the strain between trade union federations, the weaker the power of trade unions is perceived in collective bargaining. This situation calls for more skepticism from workers and a lesser interest to join trade unions.

Trade union leaders should have sensitised public opinion in a constructive way in the present era. On the one hand, external factors are putting undue pressure on the Mauritian economy with soaring and less predictable production costs. Since overheads are just keeping rising, trade unions could not really “apporter l’eau au Moulin” or simply heat up the debate. The difficult situation is understandable and the stance of trade unions remains static.

On the other hand, the high level of discontent among leaders makes it easier for government and the employers to maintain the tempo. A call for the improvement of work conditions is difficult in a setting where job losses and restructuring are inevitable and reflects the real nature of the economy.

It is not on the 1st of May that employees will solemnly listen to trade unions and consider the importance of being unionised. Mauritius is a country of traditions with deeply-entrenched values of work, lively industrial relations, collective bargaining and dialogue. It is



imperative to rethink dynamising trade unionism because leaders are chosen to respond to employee expectations and demands. The fact of accepting retreat too easily undermines the nature of trade unions that constitute the cornerstone of collective bargaining.

There are a few points to ponder. Companies having a long-standing history of successful entrepreneurship suddenly retrench middle-aged employees. Expatriates who have invested locally have left the country without being contacted and called on to explain their position. Foreign workers still face trouble and live in appalling conditions. Also, Mauritius places the stakes high with the vision of becoming a first world country by 2025 or somewhat earlier.

Too many agendas pile up the table and trade unions have to sort them out. Reflection on sensible issues on 1st May is a logical follow-up of the ongoing challenge facing the workplace. Paradoxically, trade unions do not look heightened up in their aspirations. The symbolism linked with Labour Day should not be viewed with complacency and merely as a remembrance of a historical initiative. Collectively, trade unions still have to bargain in a new environment, with new challenges and more rigour to meet the expectations of the workforce where Mauritian employees urge to be supported, indefinitely and unconditionally.

Nirmal Kumar Betchoo

### **AIII-3-Employee relations: When trade unions gain momentum**

Le Mauricien **July 2013**

The underlying economic climate in Mauritius recently called for a sudden gain in popularity of trade unions on the employee relations scene. Unions had not been particularly dormant though in a near past. In the previous years, the sugar industry was shaken by union action when workers of the industry rallied with the Sugar Industry Labour Union (SILU) to bargain with the Mauritius Sugar Planters Association (MSPA). The action to go on strike was circumvented both by strong agreements reached by the Ministry of Labour and the

sugar industry employers. There was consensus regarding the payment of arrears to the sugar industry workers. This first trigger of industrial action has also led to other related union movements in Mauritius. It is the economic climate that has developed the momentum of trade unions which remained a little dormant so far, albeit certain timid actions like representing foreign workers in their pledge for better working conditions. In today's scenario, trade unions are getting close to industry workers particularly those of the secondary sector. Although unions aligned themselves for a long time to defend the rights of employees in the textile sector, their range of action now covers sectors that were less troubled earlier.

### **Unions reach the tourist sector**

Trade unions, poorly represented in the tourism sector, have come to the help of retrenched employees in this vulnerable area. Hotels that remained the stalwart of the tourism industry have recently faced the sequels of the economic crisis in Europe. Though tourist arrivals remained fairly stable in 2013 with new markets prospected like China and India, the main Mauritian market – Europe – could not avail to save jobs in the tourism sector. Hotels have started to lay off employees with collateral effects from related businesses like tour operators and agents.

Trade unions have had their say in a sector that remained so far hermetically shielded against union intervention. The action of trade union leaders has been reasonable through the support of press coverage which shed light onto the problems facing low level employees of the tourism industry. Their long time work-related problems have been revealed to the media and eventually the public.

### **Unions come to transport industry rescue**

The transport industry remained for quite a long time unscathed by employee relation problems. The success story of the National Transport Corporation (NTC) came to a near-

end fairy tale following the tragedy that shook the nation in May 2013. The accident disclosed lots of flaws related to the transport industry. These were numerous starting from poorly maintained buses, lack of governance regarding operations management, underpaid workers with a dint of frustration at work. Transport industry employees resented privatisation that seemed to be looming. There was immediate response since that because the spectre of privatisation was temporarily waived.

Trade unions skipped from one sector to another one. The fact that they have entered the transport industry means that they have more grounds to tread upon. The transport sector seems to be a muddy path with all its risks and challenges. Unions might be representing transport industry workers on new agendas like job security, privatisation and the improvement of work and salary conditions. They might fear that quick responses from the State might undermine their action.

### **When mediation saves all**

In today's context, trade unions have emerged from their inertia. At some time, their action has been overtaken by non-government organisations like "Azir Moris" or "Say No to Coal". In the present case, unions want to take the lead understanding that workers in difficulty are keen to get their support. But then comes mediation. The recent case of mediation between the Ministry of Education and the Union of Private Secondary Education Employees (UPSEE) put things at halt. Mediation has apparently adjusted certain problems of employees but also compromised union momentum.

Union leaders will have to keep marching on since the transport sector is the new one for trade unions to "cash the milk". From the NTC, they are now moving to Triolet Bus Service, a nostalgic hallmark for transport excellence in rural areas. Unions are obliged to see how best they can get the grip of transport workers and assess how their action benefits them. And once again if mediation plays the expected role, unions might have to look for

new areas of concern.

### **The climate is still favourable**

From a broader perspective; trade unions will not lose their momentum so easily. The fact that 52,500 people have been identified as unemployed in Mauritius still gives some battling ground to unions. In this scenario, there are more job seekers than people who are out of jobs. This morose climate, which avails bleak for economic recovery, could be another test case for unions. It remains to be seen how trade unions could benefit from this situation and how they could keep up their socialist expectations now and in the coming future. They will have to struggle for employee rights and sound employee relations. Drifting away from that might seem like an intention of entering power politics...a nightmare that Mauritian trade unions generally despise.

### **AIII-4-Meade's View of Mauritius in 1961**

“Heavy population pressure must inevitably reduce real income per head below what it might otherwise be. That surely is bad enough in a community that is full of political conflict. In the absence of other remedies, it must lead either to unemployment (exacerbating the scramble for jobs between Indians and Creoles) or to even greater inequalities (stocking up still more the envy felt by the Indian and Creole underdog for the Franco-Mauritian top dog). The outlook for peaceful development is poor.”

James Meade, (1961) in *Understanding Plural Societies*, Harvard University Library.

Curriculum Vitae

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**Education**

Doctor of Business Administration 2008 – 2013  
SMC University, Switzerland

Master of Business Administration 1997 – 1999  
Napier University, Edinburgh, Scotland

Post Graduate Diploma in Marketing 1992 – 1994  
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Diploma in Administrative Management 1988 – 1990  
The Institute of Administrative Management, UK

Teacher's Certificate in Education (Primary) 1986-1988  
Mauritius Institute of Education

**Certifications**

MQA Certified Trainer at Bachelor Level  
Mauritius Quality Assurance-2004

External Examiner – University of Technology, Mauritius 2003-2006

Examiner for Mauritius Examination Syndicate – Public Exam Marker 2011

External Examiner – Mauritius Institute of Training and Development, Mauritius 2011-  
Todate

**Publications**

**Books**

People and Talent Management-National Library of Mauritius -2014  
An analysis of HRD Strategies in Secondary Schools – LAP Publishing 2012  
Evolutionary Concepts in HRM- National Library of Mauritius 2009  
Introduction to Public Sector Management - National Library of Mauritius 2005  
The Mauritian Workplace - National Library of Mauritius 2003

**Conference Papers**

Empowering the Youth through HRD –HRDC International Conference October 2013  
FDI through Franchises- Isitech National Conference April 2012  
Tertiary Education in the Indian Ocean Region- TEC International Conference June 2011

## **Journal Contributions**

### **Double blind peer-reviewed Journals:**

1. Female Empowerment in Mauritian Trade Unions: A Contemporary Analysis, International Journal of Advances in Management and Economics, ISSN: 2278-3369
2. Technological Advancement in the Written Press and New Reading Patterns: A Press Survival Perspective in Mauritius. J Mass Communication & Journalism 3:162. doi: 10.4172/2165-7912.1000162
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7. The Evolution of Industrial Democracy in a small-island economy, Mauritius, International Letters of Social and Humanistic Sciences 18 (2014) 39-47 ISSN 2300-2697
8. "Empowering youth in sub-Saharan Africa's development:-Youth as a catalyst in sub-Saharan Africa's economic development", 'Global Journal of Interdisciplinary Social Sciences in Vol. 3(3), June, 2014, ISSN: 2319-8834
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